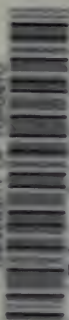


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John Gray



James S. Allen



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Marion Hepburn Tisdale

June 13. 1893.



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James Lane Allen

JOHN GRAY.

A KENTUCKY TALE OF THE OLDER TIME.

BY
SAMUEL LANE ALLEN

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY.



PHILADELPHIA:
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY.
1896.



James Lane Allen

JOHN GRAY.

A KENTUCKY TALE OF THE OLDEN TIME.

BY

JAMES LANE ALLEN,

AUTHOR OF

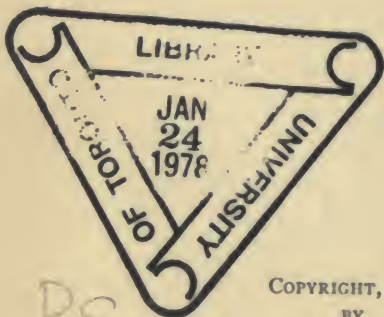
"FLUTE AND VIOLIN," "THE BLUE GRASS REGION OF KENTUCKY," ETC.



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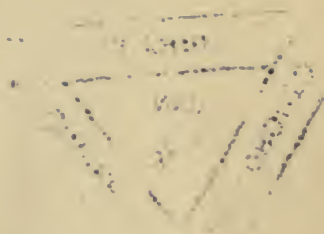
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Dedication.

TO HER
AND
TO HER MEMORY.

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JOHN GRAY.

I.

WILLIAM PENN STUMBLES.

It was an easy path to stumble in, being one of those wagon-tracks that wound mysteriously away under the dark-green forests of Kentucky and through the pale-green thickets of tall, reed-like cane, ringed with delicate purple-blossoming pea-vine. An easy path to stumble in, with huge stumps to be ridden around, and the loops and ends of roots to be avoided. And the horse was so old, so fat, so lazy, that he liked better to stumble and take the consequences than to be at the trouble to lift up his feet. Nor was the rider of a character and equipment to interfere, being a

small creature armed only with a switch of wild cherry, a little hand to jerk at the bridle-reins, and a sweet voice in which to make remonstrance. So that, as for the light shower of blows which sometimes fell upon his rounded flanks, William Penn merely gave that comforting switch of his bob tail by which he always expressed acquiescence in the small annoyances of his affluent mortality. Meanwhile, of two things he felt quite sure: that it was very kind of him to move along at all when he had it in his power to remain perfectly still; and that as soon as he grew a little hungry—which he hoped might be soon—he would stop and nibble a few mouthfuls of the delicious greenery of the wayside, of which it seemed to him that he was always full but could never get enough.

He had never tasted the Kentucky delicacy of cane garnished with pea-vine before this spring. For many years he had been the sole gig-horse of a weak-eyed old dentist and his wife living in Philadelphia. In 1793 the

doctor, greatly shrivelled and with professional fortunes that decayed faster than the molars of his acquaintances, conceived the enterprise of emigrating to Lexington, Kentucky; for the world was full of rumors touching the West, and the new land was said not only to be good for sore eyes, but to be inhabited by people who fought so much that there was constant need of new front teeth. At first he and his wife, who was delicate, had thought of setting out through the wilderness with William Penn and the gig; but, yielding to better counsels, they started in a wagon-train, though not without many embraces of their bereft servitor and minute directions that he should never be allowed to see the bottom of his manger; and hardly were they settled in Lexington before they sent back for him to come out and join them.

It is discovered that he must have left Philadelphia on his journey across the Alleghany Mountains some time early in April; but it is certain that he did not turn up in Lexington

until several months later; by which time his master and mistress, having succumbed to the hardships of the journey, homesickness, and a change of life, were dead and buried, and indeed well-nigh forgotten. So that immediately upon his arrival in town, looking a good deal ashamed of himself and not a little surprised, he was dragged with violence to the common and knocked down at public sale to a Major Falconer—price, one small mink-skin. Had William Penn known his market value, he must have been greatly mortified; for he thought extremely well of himself, after a manner of fat old creatures.

This was long ago, then, as far back as the year 1795, and near the middle of a sweet afternoon in May.

Far overhead vast mountain ridges of many-peaked gleaming clouds—those dear Alps of the blue air; outstretched far below the warm bosom of the earth, throbbing with the hope of vast maternity; two spirits abroad, everywhere shyly encountering each other and passing

into one, the pure heavenly spirit of scentless spring, born of melting snows, and the pure earthly spirit of odorous summer, born of the hearts of flowers; the road one of those wagon-tracks that were then being opened through the parklands of the Indians to the clearings of the earlier settlers, and that wound along beneath trees of which those now seen in Kentucky are the last unworthy offspring—oaks and walnuts, maples and elms, centuries old, gnarled, massive, drooping, majestic, through whose leafy arches the powerful sun hurled down only some solitary slanting spear of gold, and over whose gray-mossed roots some cold brook crept in silence; with here and there billowy open spaces of wild rye, buffalo grass, and clover, on which the light fell in solid sheets of soft radiance; with other spots of perpetual woodland twilight so dim that for ages no green shoot had sprung from the deep black vegetable mould; blown softly to and fro across this pathway, cool, pungent odors of ivy, pennyroyal, and mint, mingled

with the warmer fragrance of wild grape; flitting to and fro across it, as low as the violet-beds, as high as the topmost branches of the sycamores, unnumbered kinds of birds, some of which, like the paroquet, are now long since vanished—a primeval woodland avenue, down which the mother of mankind might fitly have walked for the adornment of her beauty as through a glade of Eden.

But, instead of the fabled mother, down it now there came in a drowsy amble an old white bob-tail horse, his polished coat shining like silver when he crossed an expanse of sunlight, fading into spectral pallor when he passed under the twilight of the rayless trees; his bushy foretop floating like a snowy plume in the light wind; his unshod feet, half-covered by the long, thick fetlocks, stepping noiselessly over the loamy earth; the rims of his nostrils expanding like flexible ebony; and in his filmy eyes that look of peace which is never seen in any but those of petted animals.

On his head he wore an old bridle with heavy

knots of wild blue violets tied at his ears; on his broad back was spread an immense blanket of buffalo-skin; on this rested a worn black side-saddle with a blue girth—newly bought, for William Penn was hard on girths—and sitting in the saddle was a young girl, whom many a young Virginian of the town to his sorrow knew to be Amy Falconer, and whom many a lonely old pioneer dreamed of as he fell asleep between his rifle and his hunting-knife in some snow-wrapt cabin of the wilderness. She was perhaps the first beautiful woman seen in Kentucky, and the first of the famous, innumerable train of those illustrious ones who for a hundred years since have wrecked or saved the destinies of the men.

The skirt of her pink calico dress, newly starched and ironed, had looked so pretty to her—so very pretty—that she had not been able to bear the thought of wearing over it this lovely afternoon her faded, mud-stained riding-habit; and it was so short and narrow that it showed, resting against the saddle, her little

feet loosely fitted into new bronze morocco shoes. On her hands she had drawn white half-hand mittens of home-knit; and on her head she wore an enormous white scoop-bonnet, lined with pink and tied under her chin in a huge white muslin bow. Her face, hidden away under the pink-and-white half-shadow of this circulating tunnel, showed such tints of pearl and rose that it seemed carved from the inner surface of a sea-shell. Her eyes were a cold gray, almond-shaped, rather wide apart, with an expression changeful and playful, but withal rather shrewd and hard; her light-brown hair, as fine as unspun silk, was parted over her brow and drawn severely back behind her opalescent toys of ears; and the lips of her little mouth curved and rested against each other as fresh and velvet-like as two half-opened rose-leaves.

Thus on she rode down that avenue of the primeval woods; and nature seemed arranged to salute her passing as for that of some lovely imperial presence: the soft waving of a hundred

green boughs above her and on each side; the hundred floating odors that are the great mother's breath of love; the flash and rush of bright wings; the swift play of nimble forms up and down the boles of trees; and all the sweet confusion of innumerable melodies.

Then happened one of those trifles that contain the history of our lives, as a drop of dew on the edge of a leaf draws into itself the majesty and solemnity of the heavens.

From the right pommel of the side-saddle there dangled a heavy roll of home-spun linen, which she was taking to town to her aunt's grocer in exchange for queensware pitchers; and behind this roll of linen, fastened to a brass ring under the seat of the saddle, was swung a bundle tied up in a large blue-and-white checked cotton handkerchief. Whenever she fidgeted in the saddle, or whenever the horse stumbled, the string by which this bundle was tied slipped a little through the knot and the bundle hung a little lower down. Just where the wagon-trail passed out into the broader public road

leading to Lexington from Frankfort, and the travelling began to be really good, the horse brought one of his lazy forefeet against the loop of a pliant root, was thrown forward in a blurred heap of white, and the bundle slipped from the saddle noiselessly to the soft earth.

She did not see it. She merely gathered the reins more tightly in one hand, pushed back her bonnet, which now hung down over her eyes like the bill of a Mediterranean pelican, and applied the switch to the horse's flank with such determined vehemence that a gadfly which was about to alight on that favored spot actually went to the other side.

And so out of the lengthening shadows of the woods they passed on toward the little town; and far behind them in the public road lay the lost bundle.

II.

A DRESS ON THE WALL.

IN the open square on Cheapside in Lexington there is a bronze statue of John Breckinridge. Not far from this spot a hundred years ago the pioneers had built the first log school-house of the town.

Poor old school-house, long since become scattered ashes! Poor little backwoods academicians, driven in about sunrise, driven out toward dusk! Poor little tired backs with nothing to lean against! Poor little bare feet that could never reach the floor! Poor little droop-headed figures, so sleepy, so afraid to fall asleep! Long, long since, little children of the past, those backs have become straight enough,

measured on a cool bed; sooner or later your bare feet, wherever wandering, have come to rest on the soft earth; and all your drooping heads have found the same dreamless pillow to sleep on, and there still are sleeping. And the imperious school-master, too, who seemed exempt from physical frailty—the young school-master who guarded as a stern sentinel that lonely outpost of the imperilled alphabet—even he long ago laid himself down on the same mortal level with you as a common brother.

John Gray, the school-master. At four o'clock that afternoon he was standing on the hickory block which formed the door-step, having just closed the door behind him for the day. Down at his side between the thumb and forefinger of one hand hung his great black hat, which was decorated with a tricolored cockade, to show that he was a member of the Democratic Society of Lexington, modelled after the Democratic Society of Philadelphia and the Jacobin clubs of France. In the open palm of

the other lay his big silver English lever watch with glass case and broad black silk fob.

A young fellow of powerful build, lean, muscular; wearing simply, but with gentlemanly care, a suit of black, which was relieved around his wrists and neck by linen, snow-white and of the finest quality. In contrast with his severe dress, a complexion singularly fresh, pure, even brilliant in tone, but colorless—the complexion of health and innocence; in contrast with this from above, a mass of coarse dark-red hair, cut short and everywhere closely curling. Much physical beauty in the head itself, the shape being noble, the pose creating an impression of dignity; almost none in the face, except in the gray eyes, which were especially eloquent and true. Yet a face not without moral significance or intellectual power; rugged as a rock, but as a rock is made less rugged by a little vine creeping over it, so his was softened by a fine net-work of nerves that wrought out upon it a look of kindness; betraying the first nature of passion, but dis-

ciplined to the second nature of patience; youthful, but wearing those unmistakable marks of maturity which mean a fierce early struggle with that vast, undying monster we call the world. On the whole, with a calm, resolute, self-respecting air of one who, having thus far won in the battle of life, has only a fiercer longing for larger conflict, and whose entire character rests on the noiseless conviction that he is a man and a gentleman.

But deeper insight would have been needed to discover how sincere and earnest a soul he was, how high a value he set on what life had in store for him and on what his life was worth to himself and to others, and how, loving rather to help himself than to be helped, he loved less to be trifled with, and least of all to be seriously hindered.

At this moment he was thinking, as his eyes rested on the watch, that if this were one of his ordinary days he would pursue his ordinary duties; he would go straight up street to the office of Marshall and for the next hour read

as many pages of law as possible; then to supper at the Sign of the Spinning-Wheel near the two locust trees; then walk out into the country for two hours; then back to his room and more law until midnight by the light of his tallow dip.

But this was not an ordinary day—being one that he had long waited for and was destined never to forget. At dusk the evening before, the post-rider, so tired that he had scarce strength to blow his horn, had ridden into town bringing the mail from Philadelphia; and in this mail there was news for him. At the thought of this he thrust his watch into his pocket, pulled his hat resolutely over his brow, and started rapidly to Main Street, turning thence toward Cross Street, now known as Broadway. On the outskirts of the town in that direction lay the edge of the forest, stretching away for hundreds of miles in all but unravished beauty.

But he did not get on as fast as he wished. Main Street was swarming with people. He knew everybody, everybody knew him. A pa-

tron of the school stopped him to explain why little Jennie had not come to school that day—poor little Jennie, in whose organism the mysteries of colic and subtraction seemed to be vitally connected, and by working together caused her many absences. A timid young lady paused to ask that he would lend her his copy of "Romeo and Juliet." A group of married ladies closed in around him with a flurry of questions as to why he always took his walk of late toward the woods on the southwestern edge of the town. An old shoemaker, flushed and angry, jumped from his stool at his front window, and begged him to come in and look at a column of figures that wouldn't "add up right," although he had been adding them ever since dinner. At the new book-store he must stop and examine various classics of English literature lately taken off the pack-horses. And when at last he had reached the long, open green common of the town, they were holding foot-races there, and three lithe young fellows, stripped and girt for racing, beheld him from

the upper end of the course and ran up with the speed of the wind, bantering him for a contest; for he was one of the best runners in the country-side.

But he disengaged himself as quickly as possible, and was soon climbing with long, rapid strides the hill where the Federal fort stood during the civil war. Then he slackened his pace. Before him stretched the primeval forest. He entered it, keeping his face turned squarely toward the lowering sun, until, having gone about a mile and a half, he came upon evidences of a clearing: felled trees, fields of young maize, orchards, a garden, and in the midst of these a frame dwelling with various comfortable outhouses.

He went on straight toward the house; but as he passed the garden he saw standing in one corner, with a rake in her hand, a delicately formed little woman in homespun, and near her a negro lad dropping garden-seed: so that he approached and leaned over the picket-fence.

“How do you do, Mrs. Falconer?”

She turned with a startled cry, dropping the rake and pushing her sun-bonnet from her eyes.

"How unkind of you to frighten me!" she said, laughing, and then she came to the fence and gave him her hand—beautiful, but hardened by work. "I am glad to see you, but I am still more glad that it is not a Shawnee, come to demand my hair."

"I have come to demand something more beautiful than your hair," he replied, laughing also, and with a flush overspreading his face.

"I shall never get used to it," she continued, not heeding his words and not yet recovered from her fright. "We have been living in Kentucky two years, but I shall never get used to this frontier life. It is not the hardship: it is the terror. I have fortitude; I've no courage. These native Kentucky women no more fear anything than so many she-bears defending their cubs. Sometimes I beg Major Falconer to let me go back to Raleigh, so that for one month I may regain the lost art of sound

sleep. Do you really believe that the country is safe? They say there is not an Indian this side of the Ohio River, but I hear and see them all the time. If anything frightens the ducks, I get weak with palpitation; and there are times when my own churn out in the yard looks like a squaw. I believe that I have something like Indian cataract forming on both eyes." And she laughed softly.

She had one of the rarest of feminine virtues: she made sport of her own weaknesses instead of those of other people.

Plainly they were good friends; and as he stood leaning over the fence with his hat in his hand and a smile lighting up his face, she went industriously back to the seed-planting.

"How can you retain your self-respect, to stand there idling and see me toiling here in the sweat of my brow, like Eve after she was cursed?"

"Perhaps it is my duty not to interfere with the operation of a divine command."

"There is no divine command that I should

plant corn; it is a necessity of the Kentucky backwoods. If I were in North Carolina, and if the major were not an impoverished patriot of the Revolution, I might be lying on a yellow satin sofa reading Voltaire. Don't you think that Voltaire and yellow satin sofas go together? And, ah, that prayer, '*Give us our daily bread*'—not make us work for it! I never omit the prayer, but the bread is never given; either I buy it or I work for it, as though I were under the old curse. Perhaps I am; perhaps I belong to the days of Sarah: this is a very primitive world I'm now in. Besides, this is not *my* work: it's Amy's work. Aren't you willing to work for Amy, John Gray?"

"I'm willing to work for her. But ought I to do her work, so long as she can do it herself? But if the queen sits quietly in the parlor eating bread and honey——"

"The queen's not in the parlor eating bread and honey. She has gone to town to stay with Kitty Poythress until after the party. Her uncle was to take her in to-morrow; but no!

she and Kitty *must* see each other to-night; and her uncle must be *sure* to bring the party finery in the gig to-morrow afternoon. I'm sorry you've had your walk for nothing; but you'll stay to supper?"

"Thank you, but I must go back."

"If you'll stay, I'll go in and make you a johnny-cake on a new ash shingle and with my own hands."

"Thank you, I really must go back. But if there's a johnny-cake already made, I could easily take it along with me."

"Do stay! Major Falconer will be so disappointed. He said at dinner there were so many things he wanted to talk to you about. He feels certain that he has at last discovered why Ophelia went mad. He hit upon this theory while he was burning brush in the new field. And, then, we have had no news for weeks. The major has been too busy to go to town, and too tired at night to read; and I!—I am as dry as one of the gourds of Confucius."

"Oh, there's news enough. Tell him that a

bookbinder has opened a shop on Cross Street—a capital hand at the business, by the name of Leischman—and that he will take in exchange, at the regular market prices, linen rags, maple sugar, and goose-quills. I advise you to keep an eye on your geese, if the major once takes a notion to have his old Shakespeare and other volumes, that had their bindings knocked off in crossing the Alleghanies, elegantly rebound. You can tell him, also, that after a squirrel-hunt in Bourbon County the farmers counted scalps and they numbered five thousand five hundred and eighty-nine; so that he is not the only one who has trouble with his corn. And then you can tell him that on the common the other day Nelson Tapp and Willis Tandy had a fearful fight over a land-suit. Now it was Tandy and Tapp; now it was Tapp and Tandy; but they went off at last and drowned themselves, if not their land, in a bowl of sagamity.”

“And there is no news for me, I suppose?”

“Oh, yes! Much. I am happy to inform

you that at McIlvain's you can now buy the finest Dutch and English qualities of letter-paper, gilt, embossed, or marbled."

"That is not very important."

"Well, then, a saddlery has been opened by two fellows from London, England, and you can now buy Amy a new side-saddle. She needs one."

"Neither is that important. Besides, the major buys the saddles for the family."

"Well, then, as I came out, I passed on Main Street some ladies who accused me of being on my way here, and who impressed upon me that I must tell you of the last displays of women-wear: painted and velvet ribbons, I think they said, and crêpe scarfs, and chintzes and nan-keens and moreens and sarcenets, and—oh, yes!—some muslinette jackets tamboured with gold and silver. You see, I am like my children: I can remember what I can't understand."

"That is less important still. I adorn myself in homespun."

"Well, then, the Indians fired on the Ohio packet-boat near Three Islands and killed——"

"Oh, mercy! I want foreign news!"

"In Holland two thousand cats have been put into the corn-stores, to check the ravages of rats and mice."

"*French* news! do be serious!"

"In New York some Frenchmen, seeing their flag insulted by Englishmen who took it down from the liberty-cap, went upstairs to the room of an English officer named Codd, seized his regimental coat, and tore it to pieces."

"I'm glad of it! It was a very proper action!"

"But, madam, the man Codd was perfectly innocent!"

"No matter! His coat was guilty. They didn't tear *him* to pieces; they tore his coat. Are there any new books at the stores?"

"Many. I have spent part of the last three days in looking over them. You can have new copies of your old favorites, Joseph Andrews, Roderick Random, or Humphrey Clinker.

You can have Goldsmith and Young, and Chesterfield and Addison. There is Don Quixote and Hudibras, Gulliver and Hume, Paley and Butler, Hervey and Watts, Lavater and Trenck, Seneca and Gregory, Nepos and even Aspasia Vindicated—to say nothing of Abelard and Héloïse and Thomas à Kempis. All the Voltaires have been sold, however, and the Tom Paines went off at a rattling gait. By the way, while on the subject of books, tell the major that we have raised five hundred dollars toward buying books for the Transylvania Library, and that as soon as my school is out I am to go East as a purchasing committee. What particularly interests me is that I am to go to Mount Vernon and ask a subscription from President Washington. Think of it! Think of my presenting myself there with my tri-colored cockade—a Kentucky Jacobin!”

She had seen from the outset that his mood was unusual. On his face, in his words, in the playful caprices of his talk—like little whirligigs of wind among dry leaves—there was a

joyous excitement the true secret mainspring of which had not yet been revealed. At this point his expression for the first time grew serious.

"The President may be so occupied with the plots of you American Jacobins that he will have neither time nor inclination to consider any such petition," she said, divining his thoughts.

"At least I am glad of my mission. I have never set eyes on a great man, and my heart beats quick at the thought of it. I feel as a young Gaul might who was going to Rome to ask Cæsar for gold with which to overthrow him. Seriously, it would be a fearful thing for the country if a treaty should be ratified with England. There is not a democratic society from Boston to Charleston that will not feel enraged with the President. You may be sure that every patriot in Kentucky will be outraged, and that the Governor will denounce it to the House."

"There is news from France, then—serious news?"

“Much, much! The National Convention has agreed to carry into full effect the treaty of commerce between the two Republics, and the French and American flags have been united and suspended in the hall. The Dutch have declared the sovereignty of the French, and French and Dutch patriots have taken St. Martin’s. The English have declared war against the Dutch and granted letters of marque and reprisals. There has been a complete change in the Spanish ministry. There has been a treaty made between France and the Grand Duke of Tuscany. The French fleet is in the West Indies and has taken possession of Guadeloupe. All French emigrants in Switzerland have been ordered to remove ten leagues from the borders of France. A hundred and fifty thousand Austrians are hurrying down toward the Rhine, to be reinforced by fifty thousand more.”

He had run over these items with the rapidity of one who has his eye on the map of the world, noting the slightest change in the situation

of affairs; and she, having left her work and come to the fence, had listened eagerly like one no less well informed.

"But the treaty! The treaty! The open navigation of the Mississippi!"

"The last news is that the treaty will certainly be concluded and the open navigation of the Mississippi assured to us forever. The major will load his flatboats, drift down to New Orleans, sell those Spanish fops his tobacco for its weight in gems, buy a mustang to ride home on, and if not robbed and murdered by the land-pirates on the way, come back to you like an enormous bumble-bee from a clover-field, his thighs heavily packed with gold."

"I am so glad, so glad, so glad!"

He drew from his pockets a roll.

"Here are papers for two months back. I'll leave them. Just now there is no time to discuss such trifles as revolutions and navies and dynasties and republics. I have come to speak of something more important. My dear

friend, I have come to speak to you about—myself!”

As he uttered the last sentence, his manner, hitherto so full of humor and vivacity, suddenly changed to one of grave gentleness, and his voice, sinking to a half-tone, became charged with penetrative music. It was the voice in which one refined and sincere soul confides to another refined and sincere soul the secret of some new happiness that has come to it.

But noticing the negro lad, who had paused in his work several paces off and stood regarding them, he said to her significantly:

“May I have a drink?”

She turned to the negro:

“Go to the spring-house and bring some water; and remember that all the milk down there is poisoned.”

The lad moved away, laughing to himself and shaking his head.

“He breaks every pitcher I have,” she added. “To-day I had to send my last roll of linen to town by Amy to buy more queensware.

The moss will grow on the bucket before he gets back."

When the boy was out of hearing, she turned again to him:

"What is it? Tell me quickly."

"I have had news from Philadelphia. The case is at last decided in favor of the heirs, and I come at once into possession of my share. It may be eight or ten thousand dollars."

She took his hands in hers with a warm, close pressure, and tears—tears of joy—sprang to her eyes.

The whole of his bare, bleak, hard life was known to her; its half-starved beginning; its early merciless buffeting; the upheaval of vast circumstance in the revolutionary history of the times by which he had again and again been thrown back upon his own undefended virtue; and stealthily following him from place to place, always closing around him, always seeking to strangle him, or to poison him in some vital spot, that most silent, subtle serpent of

life—Poverty. Knowing this, and knowing also the man he had become, she would in secret sometimes liken him to one of those rare unions of delicacy and hardihood which in the world of wild flowers nature refuses to bring forth except from the cranny of a cold rock. Its home is the battle-field of black roaring tempests; the red lightnings play among its roots; all night long seamless snow-drifts are woven around its heart; no bee ever rises to it from the valley below where the green spring is kneeling; no morning bird ever soars past it with observant song; but still in due time, with unswerving obedience to a law of beauty unfolding from within, it sets forth its perfect leaves and strains its pure face steadfastly toward a hidden sun.

These paltry thousands! She realized that they would lift from him the burden of debts that he had assumed, and give him, without further waiting, the liberty of his powers and the opportunities of the world.

“God bless you!” she said with trembling

lips. "It makes me happier than it does you."

Silence fell upon them. Both were thinking of the changes that would now take place in his life.

"Do you know," he said at length, looking into her face with the quietest smile, "that if this lawsuit had gone against me it would have been the first great defeat of my life? Sorely as I have struggled, I have yet to encounter that common myth of inefficient characters, an insurmountable barrier. I am not so sure that I believe there are forces in society that are stronger than the will. The imperfection of our lives—what is it but the imperfection of our planning and our doing? Shattered ideals—what hand shatters them but one's own? I declare to you at this moment, standing here in the clear light of my own past, that I firmly believe I shall be what I will, that I shall have what I want, and that I shall now go on rearing the structure of my life, to the last detail, just as I have long conceived it."

She did not answer, but stood looking at him with a new pity in her eyes. After all, was he so young, so untaught of the world?

"There will be this difference, of course," he added. "Hitherto I have had to build slowly; henceforth there will be no delay, now that I am free to lay hold upon the material. But, my dear friend, I cannot bear to think of my life as a structure to be conscientiously reared without settling first how it is to be lighted from within. And, therefore, I have come to speak to you about—the lamp."

As he said this a solemn beauty flashed out upon his face. As though the outer curtain of his nature had been drawn up and behind this an inner curtain and behind that yet another, she now gazed into the farthest depths and veiled semi-confidences of his inmost being.

Her head dropped quickly on her bosom; and she drew slightly back, as though to escape pain or danger.

"You must know how long I have loved Amy," he continued in a tone of forced calm-

ness. "I have not spoken sooner, because the circumstances of my life made it necessary for me to wait; and now I wish to ask her to become my wife, and I am here to beg your consent."

For some time she did not answer. The slip of an elm grew beside the picket fence, and she stood passing her fingers over the topmost leaves, with her head lowered, so that he could not see her face. At length she said in a voice uneasy and cautious:

"I have feared for a long time that this moment would come; but I have never been able to get ready for it, and I am not ready for it now."

Neither spoke for some time; only his expression changed, and he looked down upon her with a compassionate, amused gravity, as though he meant in a rather superior way to be very patient with her opposition. On her part, she was thinking—Is it possible that the first use he will make of his new liberty is to forge the chain of a new slavery? Is this some weak spot now to be revealed in his

character? Is this the sudden drain in the bottom of the lake, that will bring its high, clear level down to mud and stagnant shallows and a swarm of stinging insects?

"I have known for a year that you were interested in Amy. You could not have been so much with us without our seeing that. But let me ask you one question: Have you ever thought that I wished you to love her?"

"I have always beheld in you an unmasked enemy," he replied, smiling.

"Then I can go on and be consistent. But I feel—I feel—as though never in my life have I done a thing that is as near being familiar and unwomanly as I am now about to do. Nevertheless, for your sake—for hers—for ours—it is my plain, hard duty to ask you whether you are sure—even if you should have her consent—that my niece is the woman you ought to marry." And she lifted to him her gentle but penetrating eyes, old in the experience of life.

"I am sure," he answered in the ready tone of one who has foreseen a question.

"You have been so much with her, you know, or ought to know, her disposition, her tastes, her ways and views of life; is she the companion you need now and will always need?"

"I have been much with her," he replied, taking up the words with a mock solemnity. "But I have never worked at solving her as over an equation having various roots. I have never drawn a map of her, noting the precipices where it would be dangerous for a man to walk, and tracing the ditches into which a careless man might deserve to stumble. I have not turned the coat of my love inside out to examine the lining. I have not churned my love to see how much butter it would yield——"

"John!"

"I love her!"

"If I should feel that I must withhold my consent——"

He became serious enough, and, after the silence of a few moments, said with respectful gentleness:

"I should be sorry; but——" and then he forbore.

"If Major Falconer should withhold his?"

He shook his head, turning his face sadly:

"It would make no difference! *Nothing* would make any difference!"

"I suppose all this would be called the proof that you love her; but love is not enough to begin with; much less is it enough to live by."

"You wrong her! You do not do her justice!" he said hastily, his instinct of loyalty urging him to defend her. "But perhaps no woman can ever understand why a man loves any other woman!"

"I am not thinking of *why* you love my niece. I am thinking of why you will cease to love her if you should marry her. It would not alter the fact to know the reasons; it might alter it to foresee the results."

"My dear friend," he cried, his face suddenly aglow with impatient enthusiasm—"my dear friend," and he bent his head over to touch her hand respectfully with his lips, "I have but

one anxiety: will you cease to be my friend if in this matter I act in opposition to your wishes?"

"Should I cease to be your friend because you had made a mistake? It is not to *me* you are unkind. But let me have my last word. And think of it as you walk home."

He looked steadily and gravely into her eyes, and she, having a weight of unshed tears in hers, spoke with slow distinctness:

"Some women in marrying demand all and give all: with good men they are the happy; with base men they are the broken-hearted. Some demand everything and give little: with weak men they are tyrants; with strong men they are the divorced. Some demand little and give all: with congenial souls they are already in heaven; with uncongenial they are soon in their graves. Some give little and demand little: they are the heartless, and with them there is neither the joy of life nor the peace of death."

He did not return to town by the straight course through the woods, but followed the

winding road at a slow, meditative gait, giving himself up wholly to the influence of the hour. The low-glinting sunbeams, the gathering hush, the holy expectancy of stars, a flock of white clouds lying at rest along the sky, the greenness of the warm earth soon to be hung with dews, the redbreast on a low bough singing its evensong—these melted into his mood as notes from different instruments blend in the ear and uplift the soul into that many-toned peace which is full of pain.

But he was soon aroused in an unexpected way. When he reached the point where the wagon-track passed out into the broader road, he noticed lying several yards in front of him a large bundle tied in a blue-and-white checked cotton handkerchief.

Plainly it was a lost bundle, and his duty to find out, if possible, whose it was. So he picked it up, and, walking to one side, sat down, and, untying the four ends of the handkerchief, lifted out one wide, white lace tucker, two fine cambric handkerchiefs, two pairs of India cot-

ton hose, one pair of silk hose, two thin muslin handkerchiefs, one pair of long kid gloves—straw color—one pair of white kid shoes, one pale-blue silk coat, one thin white striped muslin dress.

Under the dress lay certain other articles; but at this point he allowed himself the benefit of his doubts.

Whose were they? Not Amy's: Mrs. Falconer had said the major was to bring *her* party finery to town in the gig the next day. They might have been lost by some one riding from Frankfort to town, or from town into the country. He knew several young women to any one of whom they might well belong.

It was dark when he got back to town, and he went straight to his room and locked the bundle in a closet; then to supper at the Sign of the Spinning-Wheel—a cheerful tavern near by; then home, where he read law with intense concentration of mind till near midnight. Then he snuffed out the candle, undressed, and stretched himself along the edge of his bed.

It was a plain bare room on the ground floor of a two-story log house. At the head of his bed there was a window opening toward the east, and the moonlight now filled the room and fell upon him where he lay.

Every bachelor is really the husband of an old maid. For every single man carries around within him the spirit of a woman to whom he is more or less happily wedded. When a man actually marries, this inner helpmate wisely disappears in the presence of her external contemporary.

The woman in Gray now began to question him remorsefully about this bundle. Was it right to leave it in his three-cornered cupboard, with his Cossack boots and other male haberdashery? The man in him said it made no difference; but the woman insisted otherwise. So that at last, for the sake of inward peace, he got patiently up with the submissive virtue of the sex, went to the cupboard, and, untying the bundle, carefully lifted out the dress.

Along the wall opposite to his bed there was

a row of pegs, on which hung his own clothes. As he now walked across the room with the dress, a light wind coming through the open window blew the soft fabric close against him, so that it folded itself around his body and limbs and clung to them. It caused him a subtle sensation of pleasure, as though it were the embrace of a woman's spirit.

Then he went back and lay on the edge of the bed again. But now the sight of the dress hanging on the wall held his eyes with a kind of dreamy fascination. The moonlight fell on it, the wind crept around and swayed it, until at times it looked like the wing of an angel restless for flight. Certainly it was the nearest approach to the presence of a woman in his room that he had ever known, and he welcomed it as the silent spotless annunciation of his own approaching destiny.

After a while he got up more resolutely under the spell of a growing fancy. He lifted out the pale-blue silk coat and hung it beside the dress. Under it there stood a low table

covered with books. He took out the white shoes and set them on this table—set them, as it happened, on his Bible—and went back and lay down again, looking at them and dreaming—looking at them and dreaming.

All the while his thoughts passed like a shining flight of white doves to *her* and hovered about her. The party came off on Thursday evening, and he was to go with her; but he now said that he could not wait until then. The long restraint he had put upon himself must end to-morrow. To-morrow he would see her and ask her to be his wife.

And then, his whole nature yielding to this resolve, as chastely as the moonbeams stole into his room from the unsullied skies his thoughts stole farther to the time when she would be his—when he would lie thus and waking in the night see her dress on the wall and feel her head on his shoulder—until his very heart ached with the intense illusion of its own happiness.

Too young, too robust, to feel at such a mo-

ment the impulse of articulate prayer, he nevertheless spent himself in one impassioned voiceless outcry, that she might not die young nor he die young; that the hardship, the pain, the conflicts of the world which had so closely begirt him hitherto, might for many years be absent from them, and that side by side they might grow peacefully old together.

And thus, lying outstretched, with his head resting on his folded hands, with the moonlight streaming through the window and lighting up his dark-red curls and falling on his face and neck and chest—as white as marble—with the cool south wind blowing down his warm limbs, with his eyes opening and closing in religious purity on the dress and his mind opening and closing on the visions of his future, he fell asleep.

III.

A LESSON FROM THE BATTLE OF THE BLUE LICKS.

WHEN John Gray awoke out of those dreams that had hung about his fancy all night, as soft white moths flutter around the half-opened hearts of flowers, and remembered that on this day he was to make a declaration of his love, for the first time his own life seemed to take on full significance. Before he got up, he stretched himself and yawned with a drowsy smile, as though the riddle of the universe floated solved from his bedpost like a yesterday's broken cobweb.

While taking his morning bath, he was struck by the beauty of his form, the tints of his flesh. He wished there had been a friend in the next room, so that he could have run

in and cried, "Really, look at my neck and chest and arms. My face does me much injustice. I am not ugly!" As he stepped out into the early morning, and lifted his face to the sky, he murmured reverently under his breath, "Ah, Lord! if all Thy days could be as beautiful as this!" During breakfast at the Sign of the Spinning-Wheel, he exclaimed more than once to his landlady about something she did for him, "What an angel you are!" and finally bade her sit down by him, and tell him whether her son were not in love.

And when he took his seat in the school-room and looked out upon the children, they had never seemed to him so small, so pitiful. It struck him that Nature is cruel because she does not fit us for love and marriage as soon as we are born—cruel that she makes us wait two-thirds of our lives before she lets us really begin to live. His eye lit upon a wee chubby-cheeked urchin on the end of a high hard bench, and he fell to counting how many long years must pass before that unsuspecting grub

would grow his palpitating wings of flame. He felt like making them a little speech and telling them how happy he was, and how happy they would all be when they got old enough.

And as for the lessons that day, what difference could it make whether ideas were sprouting sideways or upside-down in those useless brains? He asked the hard questions and answered them himself, such a mood was on him to relax; and, indeed, so sunny and exhilarating was the weather of his discipline that little Jennie, seeing how the rays fell and the wind lay, gave up the multiplication-table altogether and fell to drawing tomahawks.

A strange mixture of human life there was in Gray's school. There were the native little Kentuckians, born in the wilderness—the first wild, hardy generation of new people; and there were little folk from Virginia, from Tennessee, from North Carolina, and from Pennsylvania and other sources, huddled together, some rude, some gentle, and starting

out now to be formed into the men and women of the Kentucky that was to be.

They had their strange, sad, heroic games and pastimes, those primitive children under his guidance. Two little girls would be driving the cows home about dusk; three little boys would play Indian and capture them and carry them off; the husbands of the little girls would form a party to the rescue; the prisoners would drop pieces of their dresses along the way; and then at a certain point of the woods—it being the dead of night now, and the little girls being bound to a tree, and the Indians, having fallen asleep beside their smouldering camp-fires—the rescuers would rush in, and there would be whoops and shrieks, and the taking of scalps, and a happy return. Or some settlement would be shut up in a fort besieged. Days would pass. The only water was a spring outside the walls, and around this the enemy skulked in the corn and grass. But the warriors must not perish of thirst. So, with a prayer, a tear, a final embrace, the little women

marched out through the gates to the spring, in the very teeth of death, and brought back water in their wooden dinner-buckets.

Or, when the boys would become men with contests of running, and pitching quoits, and wrestling, the girls would play wives and have a quilting in a house of green alder-bushes, or be capped and wrinkled grandmothers sitting beside imaginary spinning-wheels and smoking imaginary pipes.

Sometimes it was not Indian warfare, but civil strife. For one morning as many as three Daniel Boones appeared on the playground at the same moment; and at once there was a fierce battle to ascertain which was the genuine Daniel. This being decided, the spurious Daniels submitted to be the one Simon Kenton, the other General George Rogers Clark.

This was to be a great day for what he called his class in history. Thirteen years before, and forty miles away, had occurred the most dreadful of all the battles—the disaster of the Blue Licks; and in town were many mothers

who yet wept for sons, widows who yet dreamed of young husbands, fallen that beautiful August day beneath the oaks and the cedars, or floating down the red-dyed river.

It was this that he had promised to tell them of at noon; and a little after twelve o'clock he was standing with them on the bank of the Town Fork, in order to give vividness to his description. This stream flows unseen beneath the streets of the city now, and with scarce current enough to wash out its grimy channels; but then it flashed broad and clear through the long valley which formed the town common—a valley of scattered houses with orchards and corn-fields and patches of cane.

A fine poetic picture he formed as he stood there amid their eager upturned faces, bare-headed under the cool brilliant sky of May, and reciting to them, as a prose minstrel of the wilderness, the deeds of their fathers.

This Town Fork of the Elkhorn, he said, must represent the Licking River. On that side were the Indians; on this, the pioneers, a

crowd of foot and horse. There stretched the ridge of rocks, made bare by the stamping of the buffalo; here was the clay they licked for salt. In that direction headed the two ravines in which Boone had feared an ambuscade. And thus variously having made ready for battle, and looking down for a moment into the eyes of a freckly impetuous little soul who was the Hotspur of the playground, he repeated the cry of McGary, which had been the signal for attack:

“Let all who are not cowards follow me!”

Here he had paused, and with uplifted finger was warning them that from this tragedy of their fathers they could learn a lesson which ought to last them all their lives—never to be over-hasty or over-confident, never to go forward without knowing the ground you are to tread, or throw themselves into a conflict without learning the nature of the enemy—he was doing this, and at the same time thinking that before he slept that night he would be happy in the declaration of his love, when a

child came skipping joyously across the common, and pushing her way up to him through the circle of his listeners, handed him a note. He opened it, and in an instant the great battle, hills, river, horse, rider, shrieks, groans, all vanished as silently as a puff of white smoke from a distant cannon.

For a while he stood motionless, with his eyes fixed upon the paper, so absorbed as not to note the silence that had fallen upon the throng around him. At length, merely saying in a kind voice, "I will tell you the rest some other day: I must go now," he walked rapidly across the common in the direction from which the little messenger had come.

A few minutes later he stood at the door of Father Poythress, the Methodist minister, asking for Amy. But she and Kitty had ridden away and would not return till night. So, leaving careful word that he would come to see her then, he went to his school-room and sat waiting for the afternoon duties to begin.

In the note she had broken her engagement

with him for the party, giving no reasons. At first he had feared she might be ill; but, having been now set right, he felt no further concern on that point. He was not a party-loving man himself. If she did not go, he would not; and it was in exact accord with his own preference that they would pass the evening together alone. As for her breaking the engagement in a manner so mysterious, he argued that she had her own reason. He could honor it, or honor any other demand that she might ever have to make on his confidence.

Nevertheless, there remained a sense of uneasiness, so that he grew displeased with himself that he should reveal any disposition to be petty with her and exacting. During the afternoon he was drawn out of himself by his duties; and when at last there came release from these, one thought took immediate possession of his whole nature: in a few hours he was to ask her to be his wife.

The exuberance of high spirits which agitated him at rising had passed with the passing

of the day; and as he now closed the school-house door behind him, and stepping out upon the open square, strode away under the long shadows of the few forest trees that still stood in the heart of the town, his mood was grave, and in his heart he knew not what throb of exalted sadness caused him to shrink from the boisterous life of the street and turn his face to nature.

Not far from the town there was a deep woods still untouched by civilization; and toward this he bent his footsteps. Penetrating to its heart, he came upon an open green knoll sloping toward the west—a favorite spot; and here he spent the last moments of day and of early twilight, thinking of the coming interview and trying to realize the solemn meaning of these closing hours to him.

They were a farewell and a beginning. A farewell to his boyhood and his youth—in a sense a farewell to himself. Never again was he to be merely one soul in his passage through the world, coming none knew whence, going

none knew whither, but beside him henceforth was to journey another soul, the two having one path, one aim, one inseparable existence. With this soul all that had thus far been his own was now to be divided; from that soul he was to receive back all that he gave—the same, and yet how different; bond for bond, heart for heart, duty for duty, life for life.

His betrothal! For years he had worshipped toward this height. He looked upon it as the supreme shrine of his soul, set on a white mountain-peak; and he felt that he must pass upward to it over a pathway of thoughts as pure as a fresh fall of snow.

With a kind of stern exultant joy he thought that at last the time had come when he could drop from his character its barrier and disguises and reveal himself to her. How much more she could love him then, having come to understand him in his real nature! Their association had always been more trivial than he could have wished. They had seemed to play at each other only before the drop-curtains of

their natures and from confronting stages. But, just as he had never done himself justice, so he was sure that behind her pretty childish talk and pouting coquetries there were corresponding depths of noble character to be discovered. Thus, he had always loved her best, not for what he saw in her, but for what he believed remained unseen; and he had valued her most, not for what she was, but for what in time he fancied she would become. And now he did not doubt that, meeting him on the high level of a new sacred union, she would come forth the real woman in sympathetic companionship.

A complete tenderness overcame him with this vision of her; a look of all but religious reverence for her filled his eyes. The last rays of the sun struck the summit of the green knoll on which he was lying. The sunset was one of unsurpassed softness and repose, with depth after depth opening inward, as though to the heart of the infinite love. The boughs of the trees over his head were hung with blossoms.

There were blue and white flowers at his feet.

“I have ended the first season of my life!” he cried: “winter lies behind me. I am about to pass into the second: it is my spring. What are flowers but nature’s declaration of love! My heart, too, has burst into bloom; and now that it is open, like them it can never, never close again.”

Thus lifted up for his meeting with her, he could not bear the thought, as he walked back to town, that he should have to speak first with any other human being. Ordinary conversation would jar on him, a rude coarse word on the street defile him. Fortunately, he reached his room unmolested; and there, having carefully but without vanity dressed himself in his best, he took his way to the house of Father Poythress.

There were some minutes of waiting. More than once he heard in another room the sounds of smothered laughter and of two voices—one in appeal, one in refusal; then there was

laughter again; and then at last Amy slowly entered the room, holding Kitty Poythress by the hand.

All day she had been looking for her lost bundle, riding to different homesteads in the country, inquiring at others in town. She had come home at dark with the last hope that it might have been returned during her absence.

Now she was tired, worried over the loss of her things, disappointed that she could not go to the party of which she had dreamed for weeks. Her beautiful little head was wearing its heaviest crown of thorns, composed of deep-piercing sorrows and griefs. She did not wish to see any one, least of all John Gray, with whom she had broken her engagement, and who, no doubt, had come to know the reason. But if she told him her reason, it would only make matters worse; for he would say, "Can't you wear another dress? What makes the difference?" and look at her in the grave, kind, patient, rather pitying way in which he would look at one of his school-children who had

misspelled a word of one syllable. In the bottom of her heart she felt that he in the bottom of his was always bearing with her and making allowances for her, as for a child who would learn better by and by. She secretly resented this, since it wounded her vanity to be made to feel that she was not perfect; and certainly to-night she was in no mood to have her troubles smiled over and herself magnanimously pardoned for being justifiably wretched.

Therefore, as she advanced slowly into the room, holding Kitty by the hand, her manner was listless, petulant, and resentful.

She gave him one of her beautiful little hands, pouted, smiled, dropped on a sofa by Kitty's side, strengthened her hold on Kitty's hand, and asked Kitty whether she did not feel tired.

"We are both so tired," she then said to Gray, with the air of being willing at least to include him in the conversation. "And William Penn is so broken down, and so hungry, and I am so afraid he will starve to-night at

the tavern stable. I wish, as you go home, you would stop by there and tell them to give him as much as he can eat. He is so unhappy when he is hungry!"

Gray muttered rather meekly that he would go with pleasure.

"You know we've been riding nearly all day, there were so many places to go to. How many miles have we travelled, Kitty? Of course Kitty couldn't count exactly," she continued, ignoring Kitty's smothered laugh, "because there are no mile-posts in Kentucky. Would you rather ride with mile-posts or without mile-posts?" This she asked in the manner in which a charming kitten might inquire of a grown-up cat whether it loved sunshine.

He sat looking steadily at her this time without replying, and the silence became awkward.

"I suppose you want to know why I broke my engagement with you," she cut in with a hard voice; "but I don't think you ought to ask. I think you ought to accept my reason without wanting to know it."

"I do accept it. I had never meant to ask," he answered, speaking quickly but quietly, like a person who recalls some trifle that had been forgotten.

"Oh, don't be too indifferent," she cried with sarcastic humor. "It would not be complimentary. You ought to be very much disappointed. You ought to want to know my reason, but you ought not to ask what it is."

Then again he sat looking at her in silence.

"And you really don't care to know why I broke my engagement? You really don't?"

"Not unless you should wish to tell me."

"It is a very serious reason; isn't it, Kitty?"

"That I had never doubted."

"It might seem very amusing to *you*."

"It could scarcely be both."

"Yes, it is; it is both. I'll tell you why I am not going with you: I have lost my reason for going." And she and Kitty exchanged a look of intelligent amusement. He felt only that he was being incredibly trifled with, and sought to change the subject. A few minutes

later Kitty tried to leave the room; but Amy tightened her clasp, and gave Kitty the threatening glance of one who holds another to a promise. It was impossible not to divine between them the kind of understanding that any man finds it hard to forgive; but he continued to talk to both for some minutes longer. Then again, and more openly, Kitty endeavored to make her escape; again, and more openly, she was withheld.

At once he rose to go, unruffled, polite, even with an awkward attempt at a sally of humor in his leave-taking. But once out of doors, he fell quickly to work upon making out a case in her favor. A low, vague, ominous, terrible ground-swell of anger in his mind must instantly be quieted.

She had not known why he came that evening: how could she know? To her it was simply an ordinary call at an unfortunate hour; for she was tired—he could see that—and worried—he could see that also. And he himself was responsible for the failure of the even-

ing. For had he ever been so solemn, so unpliant, so implacably in earnest? What wonder if she had dreaded to be left alone with him? Thus he reasoned until he had wrought out in his own conscience her complete justification. And, having wrought it out, he sternly dismissed the subject.

But who at any time sounds the lowest depths of our mysterious human nature, so calm on the surface, so tempest-tossed at the bottom? What power is it in the mind that rejects the processes of its own best powers? After he restored her to stainless supremacy over his imagination, that low, vague, ominous ground-swell of angry disappointment within him would not be quieted. Never before had he approached her with such lofty demands; never before had his failure been so overwhelming. He was not a sentimentalist. His mood of the night preceding, when he had lain for hours in luxurious fondling of his own hidden ideals—his mood of that afternoon in the heart of the woods, when he had believed the hour

of his betrothal near and had become a child transported with joy—these were solitary experiences in the development of a nature essentially practical and self-controlled; and as he now sat in his room, thoughtful, critical of his conduct, and sensible of his failure, he said that never again could such a betrayal of himself occur. In a moment of unreckoning confidence he had called his heart a flower, which, having burst into bloom, could never close again; but it may be doubted whether that night this flower did not close up as though its petals were so many lids of iron. A nature proud and self-respecting will never show more of itself to others than others show that they can appreciate. If at any time, misled by vague sights and sounds outside, a shy hand appears at a window of the inmost citadel of being and scatters pearls to those below, when it is discovered that those below are swine the hand will be quickly drawn in and the window closed.

But it was with opposing circumstances that

Gray loved most to battle. That was the whole meaning of his past. When, therefore, he fell asleep—and he fell asleep very soon—it was with sterner resolution to spend the next evening with Amy, and make her an offer of his hand. If the breaking of her engagement with him and her later unwillingness to be left alone with him meant anything, then he would know to the last merciless degree what that meaning was.

And thus ended in bitter disappointment the day which was to have been that of his betrothal. By a confusion of the ideas which had agitated him during the foregoing hours, through his dreams ran a conflict: she stood on one side of a river, with ambuscades in the forest behind her; on the other he stood with his school-children; she beckoned to him; and he was trying to cross to her, ever repeating the words of McGary at the dreadful battle of the Blue Licks:

“Let all who are not cowards follow me!”

IV.

EDITORIAL SECRETS.

THE next night fell cool and sweet from the flashing skies. It was the evening of the party at the home of General James Wilkinson, who had just returned from a trip to New Orleans. The occasion was extraordinary, and invitations had been sent to most of the prominent and distinguished families of the town.

Eight o'clock came. Near Gray's school-house on the open square stood another log-house—the editorial rooms of the *Kentucky Pioneer*. The front room was now closed and dark; but light issued through a calico curtain drawn before a window of the back-room and from beneath the crack of the door.

In one corner of this editorial room, which was also the printing-room, stood a worn hand-press with two dog-skin inking-balls. Between

the logs of the wall near another corner a horizontal iron bar had been driven, and from the end of this bar hung a saucer-shaped iron lamp filled with bear-oil. Out of this oil stuck the end of a cotton rag for a wick; which, being set on fire, filled the room with a strong smell and a feeble, murky, flickering light. Under the lamp stood a plain oak slab on two pairs of cross-legs; and on the slab were papers and letters, a black ink-horn, some leaves of native tobacco, and a large gray-horn drinking-cup—empty. Under the table lay an empty bottle.

In a rough chair before this drinking-cup sat Stafford, editor of the *Kentucky Pioneer*, smoking a long tomahawk-pipe. His head was tilted backward, his eyes followed the flight of smoke upward, and a smile suffused his face—the smile of a man pleased with what he is, and with something he is about to do. Once his smile grew broader, and his diaphragm shook silently with an earthquake of subterranean amusement.

That he expected to be at the party might

have been inferred from his dress, which was miscellaneously magnificent: a worn blue broadcloth coat with yellow gilt buttons; a swan's-down vest with broad stripes of red and white; a pair of dove-colored corded-velvet pantaloons with three large yellow buttons on the hips; and a neckcloth of fine white cambric.

The smell of the burning oil, of spirits, of tobacco, did not disguise the fact that he was heavily perfumed. His figure was thickset, strong, cumbrous, his hair black and very beautiful, his eyes black, bold, vivacious, untrustworthy, and now a little inflamed. There was a deep vertical mark down the middle of his forehead, and his lips were thick and red. His hands also were thick and soft, and the nails not irreproachable.

He had just risen to snuff the wick in the lamp overhead, when there came a knock on the door; and, to Stafford's surprise and displeasure—for he thought he had locked it—there entered without waiting to be invited a

low, broad-chested, barefooted, blond young fellow, his brown-tow breeches, rolled up to his knees, showing a pair of fine white calves; a clean shirt thrown open at the neck and rolled up to the elbows, displaying a noble pair of arms; a ruddy shine on his quiet face; a drenched look about his short, thick, whitish hair, and a comforting smell of soap emanating from his entire person.

Seeing him, Stafford looked less displeased; but keeping his seat and merely taking the pipe from his lips, he said, with an air of facetious sarcasm, "I would have invited you to come in, Peter, but I see you have not stood on ceremony."

"Well," said Peter, stoutly, taking a short cob-pipe from his mouth, "I didn't suppose you would object to my coming in and handing you this." And walking forward, he clapped down on the oak slab a round handful of shillings and pence. "Count it, and see if it's all there."

"What's this for?" Stafford looked at the

money with sparkling eyes, but spoke in a tone of wounded astonishment.

"What do you suppose it's for?"

"Well, you *have* had an advertisement running in the paper for some time," admitted Stafford with reluctance.

"That's what it's for then! And what's more, I've got the money to pay for a better one, whenever you'll write it."

The words seemed to have their effect.

"Sit down, sit down, sit down!" Stafford jumped from his chair, hurried across the room—a little unsteadily—emptied a pile of things on the floor, and dragged back a heavy oak stool. "Sit down. And Peter?" he added inquiringly, tapping his empty drinking-cup.

"Go ahead," replied Peter with an air of indifference. "Don't let me interfere."

Stafford drew a key from his pocket and shook it under Peter's nose. Then he went to the door and locked it; then across the room to a dark cupboard; and after some minutes of fumbling and two or three trips back and forth,

he placed on the table a bottle of fourth-proof French brandy, a bottle of Jamaica rum, a bottle of Holland gin, a bottle of cherry bounce, a bottle of Martinique cordial, a bottle of Madeira wine, one of port and one of sherry, a bottle of cider, and another drinking-cup. Then he sat down and faced Peter in silence.

"That's more than I want," said Peter, with a nod at the display.

"All for advertisements!" said Stafford, waving his hand triumphantly over the collection; and then, scraping Peter's money off the table, he let it jingle carelessly piece by piece into his pocket, accurately counting it nevertheless between his fingers and thumb. "All for advertisements! Two or three of these dealers have been running bills up on me; and to-day I stepped in and told them I'd submit to be paid in merchandise. And here's the merchandise. What brand of merchandise will you take?"

"We had better take what you have *been* taking," replied Peter, with a look of warning at Stafford's flushed face.

"Just as you please, Peter. It's all good enough for me."

He had left the bottle of French brandy, carrying the other articles back to the cupboard, except one. "This too, Peter," he pleaded persuasively, setting the Jamaica rum beside the brandy.

"They don't go together," objected Peter.

"They go together if you *make* them go together. Now, then, say when enough." And he began to fill the cups.

"Hold on!" cried Peter, laying a provident hand on Stafford's arm. "Hold on! My advertisement first!"

"Just as you please."

"About twice as long as the other one," instructed Peter, scratching his head.

"Very well; about twice as long as the other one." Stafford set the bottle down, took up a goose-quill, and drew a sheet of paper before him.

"My business is increasing," prompted Peter still further.

Stafford made a note on the margin of the sheet.

"All right; your business is increasing. Now wait a minute."

"How will this do to start with?" he asked, after writing rapidly a while:

"'Mr. Peter Springle continues to carry on the blacksmith business on Main Street in Lexington, near the public square, and opposite the Sign of the Indian Queen. It is supposed that Mr. Springle cannot be rivalled in horse-shoeing. He keeps on hand a constant supply of axes, chains, and hoes, which he will sell at prices usually asked——' "

"Stop," interrupted Peter, whose nostrils had sniffed a strange, agreeable odor of personal praise in the opening lines. "You might say something more about *me*, before you bring in the axes."

"Just as you please; we'll say something more about you." And after a minute of indecision Stafford read as follows:

"'Mr. Peter Springle executes his work with

satisfaction and despatch; his work is second to none in Kentucky; no one surpasses him; he is a noted horseshoer; he does nothing *but* shoe horses.' "

"That sounds more like it," admitted Peter, candidly.

"Let's combine business with pleasure, however," said Stafford laying down the quill and reaching for the bottle. "Now, then," resumed he with a fresh interest, after they had touched cups and drained them. "Is that enough about you?"

"Oh, if that's all you can *say!*" muttered Peter with surly disappointment.

"Not at all! The subject is hard to exhaust."

"'Mr. Springle devotes himself entirely to the shoeing of fine horses; *fine* horses are often injured by neglect in shoeing; Mr. Springle does not injure *fine* horses, but shoes them all around with new shoes at one dollar for each horse.' How is that?"

"Pretty good," nodded Peter.

"Is that enough about *you?*"

"Oh, if that's all you can *say!*"

"By no means!"

There was a hidden flash in Stafford's eyes, and he drew his thick red lips in against his teeth. After some minutes he read again:

"'Mr. Springle is the most illustrious blacksmith that ever left New Jersey——'"

"Or that ever *lived in* New Jersey," interrupted Peter, strengthening the position.

"'Or that ever *will live in* New Jersey! The father of Mr. Springle had the honor of shoeing Washington's favorite horse just before the battle of Trenton, or otherwise the general might never have led the Americans to victory. Mr. Springle, then a small but highly intelligent lad, closely watched his father during this performance, and derived great profit from the experience. Afterward he had the good fortune to witness the battle of Trenton from a floating cake of ice exactly the shape of a horse-shoe.' How is that?"

The brilliancy of this rocket, rising sud-

denly out of the darkness of his past, so dazzled Peter that he sat temporarily blinded. Then he rubbed his elbows slowly in the palms of his hands, and said, carefully and gravely:

"Now bring in about the axes."

Stafford rose and pinched the cotton wick. Reseating himself, he seized the bottle and poured out more liquor, tossing off his own cup at a draught. His spirits were rising. He laughed to himself almost constantly.

"Peter," he suddenly said, squaring himself and hitching his chair confidentially, "I'm going to let you into a secret."

"I don't want to *know* any secrets," replied Peter. "I don't want to know anything I can't tell."

"You don't know any secrets? You don't know that last week Horatio Turpin sold a ten-dollar horse in front of your shop for a hundred because he had——"

"Oh, I know some horse secrets," admitted Peter, carelessly.

“Exactly! It’s a horse secret I’m going to tell you.”

He made an awkward stumble as he crossed the room; and he fumbled awkwardly in a dark corner at a frame-work of pigeon-holes nailed against the wall. But finally he came back with two pieces of writing-paper, which he spread out on the slab. Then he reached for the brandy with a cold, formal bow to Peter, who accepted the attention with equal coolness.

“Now for the secret! Here, Peter, is an advertisement that has been left here to be inserted in the next paper: ‘Lost, on Tuesday evening, on the road between Frankfort and Lexington, a bundle of clothes tied up in a blue-and-white checked cotton handkerchief, and containing one white muslin dress, a pale-blue silk coat, two thin white muslin handkerchiefs, one pair long kid gloves—straw color—one pair white kid shoes, two cambric handkerchiefs, and some other things, not distinctly remembered. Whoever will deliver said clothes

to the printer, or give information so that they can be got, will be liberally rewarded on application to him.'

"And here, Peter, is another advertisement to be inserted at the same time: 'Found, on Tuesday evening, on the road between Lexington and Frankfort, a bundle of clothes tied in a handkerchief. In the bundle were noticed some gloves and handkerchiefs and shoes, a green silk apron, and some other things which the finder wishes to say that he did not separately examine. The owner can recover property by calling on the printer.'

"Now for the secret!" He pushed the papers away from him and wheeled on his listener. He was losing what little control over himself he had hitherto kept. His eyes flashéd with an expression of humorous revenge. He threw his head back and laughed loud and slapped Peter familiarly on the knee. Then suddenly he laid his hand on the Jamaica rum.

"Rum," muttered Peter, with admirable brevity, and held out his horn cup.

"Now, Peter," said Stafford a minute later, "set your cup on the table and listen.

"Yesterday morning who should slip around here but that high and mighty little mistress, Amy Falconer. But I hardly believed my eyes! No dimplings and poutings, no setting her head on one side, no mischief, no airs, no vanity, no smiles, no anything but red, swollen eyes, a puckered mouth, fear, vexation, disappointment, despair! A more lost and ruined soul may I never behold! And then, in such a voice, she began to tell such a tale; how, oh, Mr. Stafford, she had *such* a secret to tell me, and wouldn't I do something to help her! How, coming to town the day before, she had, contrary to the express orders and without the knowledge of her aunt, made her old black mammy tie her party clothes up in a blue-and-white checked handkerchief and then tie this to a ring in the side-saddle. Weep, Peter, weep! How on the way this bundle did come untied and fall unnoticed to the road; how, when she reached town and missed it, she had

sent some one back along the road, but in vain, somebody else having come along in the meantime and picked it up! Weep, Peter, weep! How she had come to see me to inquire whether any one had left the clothes with me to be advertised; or whether I wouldn't put an advertisement in the next issue of the paper; and whether, if they were left at my office before Thursday evening, I wouldn't send them to her at once. For oh! oh! oh! she couldn't go to the party! and they were so beautiful! and they had cost so much! and she'd have to break her engagement! and her aunt and uncle! and oh, my! oh, my! Peter, have you no tears for woman's sorrow?"

"Ahem!" said Peter, dryly, but with a good deal of moisture in his eyes.

"Well, she hadn't more than gone before who should come in here but a boy bringing this same bundle of clothes with a note from John Gray, saying that he had found them in the public road yesterday, and asking me to send them at once to the owner, if I

should hear who she was; if not, to advertise them."

"*That's* no secret," said Peter, with contempt.

"*Now* for the secret! I might have sent that bundle right around to my Mistress Amy, and that would have been the end of it. But, Peter, let me tell you one thing; when an editor has anything against a man, he always forgives him, but—he gets even with him first. Love your enemies, Peter, but punish them first. Then it comes easier. Then it is not only divine; then it is human. Ha, ha, ha!

"Now, Peter, I've got no favors to ask of Mistress Amy Falconer, and I've none to grant. I don't forget the past as easily as she does." The result of Stafford's precipitate suit was known to the town. "And as for this Pennsylvania school-teacher—this red-headed Scotch-Irishman——"

"Hold on!" cried Peter, quickly. "Not a word against *him*! I won't like it."

"We won't like it, won't we? Oh, no!

We won't like it! We are getting to be such meek and pious New Jersey Lutherans in these days of the Kentucky millennium. We are getting to be such two-checked saints in the days of the Cherokees. We are getting to be such accomplished blacksmiths and such humble mumblepegs! How many of the Psalms of David are you the author of? Oh, no! Not a word against *him*! Well, I can tell you, my aged paragon of infantile virtue, that not two days ago I heard this same Pennsylvania woodpecker, this long-legged, black-legged snipe, this soft sly cuckoo, this twilight whippoorwill of a pedagogue—I heard him tell four men that Jerry Neave was the best blacksmith in town! Oh, no! Not a word against *him*. We won't like it."

. Poor Peter! The best of his faculties had already sunk beneath the level of the deluge which was now rising rapidly and threatened to become universal. Still, he merely gave several threatening sidewise shakes of the head, and his neck seemed to swell a little.

“And if *you* have to stand this from him, think of what *I*—a Virginia gentleman! I tell you, Peter, when a man of my family connections——! But I don’t want to go too far. I only want to have a little fun out of him.”

“Yes; let’s have a little fun out of him,” assented Peter, beguiled.

“That’s just what I was going on to tell you. When he sent the bundle of clothes here yesterday morning, I laid it away in that closet. There it will stay, said I to myself, and Mistress Amy and her school-master and the party may go to the devil!”

From this point Stafford so fell under the influence of his cups that his further confidences were hard to follow through their wanderings. Being of an affectionate nature, he several times tenderly took Peter’s hand, which Peter several times withdrew.

The idea of keeping the bundle hidden at his office until after the party was one of those

crude pranks that occur naturally to a certain order of mind, and that were peculiarly characteristic of that place and time.

Teasing of a sentimental sort is always a common resource in village humor; and in the little frontier town of Lexington at that period young men were many, young women few, and rivalries bitter and keen; so that the least event in the career of a beautiful girl became for weeks the nightly talk at the riotous inns and taverns.

And then Stafford was one of those men—if men they may be called—who love to figure as the hero of a small annoyance. Manly tragedy was beyond him. The fibre of his nature was too weak and flimsy to stand the strain of any great passion, good or bad. But had he been forced to become a member of a circus company, and been left free to choose his part, he would have chosen to be ring-master, for the satisfaction of standing at the small centre of things and cracking a long whip at every feature of the passing show—cracking it play-

fully, but now and then a little cruelly, as if by accident. And if he could not have been ring-master he would have liked to be the clown, for the sake of having the greatest number of people on his side and of raising the laugh at everybody else.

To have seen John Gray annoyed for a day—that would have been a week's joy. To have caused Gray any final disappointment in his love affair—that would have furnished him satisfaction for the rest of his life.

Therefore, the bundle having been lost on Tuesday, and been sent to his office by Gray on Wednesday, his plan was to keep it until Friday, the day after the party. But on Thursday, with much inward enjoyment of his scheme, there suddenly came to him the idea of making it still better, and he turned his steps to a quarter of the town where Joseph Holden was shingling a new house.

"Halloo, Joseph!" he said, as though stopping casually. "Don't work too hard to-day, or you won't be able to dance all night."

"I can do both," Joseph had called down to him, meantime sending a nail home at a blow.

"And sing all day in the bargain. You are a strange fellow, Joseph! Another man is going with the woman you love, but you are as happy as though it were yourself."

Joseph kept steadily on at his work.

"There's one girl that neither of you will dance with to-night."

"Who's that?" asked Joseph, in a tone which showed his indifference.

"Amy Falconer. She has broken her engagement with Gray, and is not going to the party."

The hammer dropped from Joseph's hand to the ground, and he sat staring down at nothing. Then he jumped off the roof of the house as lightly as though it had been five feet instead of fifteen, picked up his hammer, and came close up to Stafford.

"What do you mean? Have they quarrelled?" In his look and tone there was the

revelation of a love that had no hope except through the failure of a rival.

"Who knows? She has broken her engagement with him. She is not going to the party with him. And she will be by herself all the evening at the house of Kitty Poythress, who is going with Horatio Turpin."

"It is none of my affair," remarked Holden after a moment of thought, and, climbing to the roof, he went on with his work without taking any further notice of Stafford, who moved away.

"Our young carpenter is as wise as a dove and as cunning as a squab." And he laughed to himself. "He is as hard to drive into a little scheme as a tenpenny nail through a thin shingle. There are only two things that I'd stake my life on: that the sun will set to-night, and that when it does, he'll go to spend the evening with Amy Falconer."

It turned out as he had expected. A little after seven o'clock that evening, Stafford, who was watching, saw Joseph enter the yard of

Father Poythress. At once he hurried to his office, and gave the bundle to his negro boy with a note stating that he hoped it would be received in time for her to go to the party. He himself followed the boy under cover of darkness some yards behind.

The Poythress homestead had a front veranda in the old Maryland style, and there was shrubbery in the yard. As the boy stepped upon the veranda, where the voices of Joseph and Amy could be distinguished talking, Stafford waited behind these bushes. He heard the girl's cry of surprise and delight as she read his note by the light from inside the house, and as she beheld her lost treasure; he heard her say, joyously, "You can go with me to the party, Joseph, and when we get there, we can explain everything to John, and he can come home with me;" he heard Joseph repeat her very words, and then he stole out of the yard—satisfied; for John Gray had told him that he was not going, and John Gray would know nothing of all this till the next day,

when the whole town would be laughing at him.

During the afternoon Gray had indeed said to Joseph that he expected to drop in late at the party out of respect to his host and hostess, —thinking to himself that this would be after his interview with Amy; and as he stepped into the school-room in the afternoon he had said the same thing to Stafford, who stopped to ask him. But Stafford had replied that his post-rider left with the mail at four o'clock the next morning, and that if Gray had letters to send they must be ready. Gray had letters of the utmost importance to write—to his lawyer, for one, regarding the late decision in the will case, and to the secretary of the Democratic Club in Philadelphia touching the revival of activity in the clubs throughout the country on account of the expected treaty with England; so that he had said to Stafford that, this being the case, he would not have time to go to the party at all, but would have his mail ready by twelve o'clock—thinking again to himself that

he would write his letters after his interview with Amy.

Thus in more than one way Stafford's cup of pleasure overflowed that evening. He did not foresee the possible consequences of his pleasantry. He was not a man to realize that nothing may be more serious than a coarse, unreckoning jest.

It was now about eleven o'clock. The forgotten wick of the lamp was charred and smoking, the bottle of rum was far from being full, and in the flickering light of the room the heads and bodies of Stafford and Peter, drawn close to the oak table and close to each other, bobbed and swayed vaguely, like two enormous sandpipers about to take flight for a safer shore.

For an hour Stafford had been trying to get himself started to the party; but he was never to reach there. He had just taken his last cup, and sat glaring at Peter in a stubborn incompetence of ideas, until his vacant eye

noticed the smoke with which the room was filling.

Then he suddenly called out in a key of high comedy :

"Peter, you've got a halo. Hail, St. Peter!"

"I *haven't* got a halo!" swore Peter, who didn't know what a halo was, but didn't fancy having one, and, besides, was no admirer of St. Peter.

"I decline to quarrel with you, Peter, about anything so light as a halo," observed Stafford with some disgust.

All at once he leaned over and let his head rest on Peter's shoulder.

"Peter," he murmured, caressing one of the young blacksmith's bare arms, "you have never known the great Passion. You have never felt what the great Sappho sings of. You don't even know the divine Sappho."

"Don't know her!" cried Peter, cruelly stung by the accusation. "Haven't I got to shoe her at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning?—John Barnett's yellow sorrel, with a nick in

her ear, a swelling in her groin, a blaze in her forehead, and a white foot? Don't *know* her!"

Stafford slowly raised his head from Peter's shoulder and gazed solemnly at him with open mouth and wondering eyes, in a last vain attempt to grasp the clew to this fresh misunderstanding.

"Who'd you say Sappho was, Peter?" he asked, meekly. "Who'd you say Sappho was?"

"What'd I come here for, anyhow?" abruptly inquired Peter, who had been partly recalled to soberness by the thought of shoeing horses.

"Who'd you say Sappho was?" repeated Stafford. "All my life I been thinking Sappho was a—Sappho was a—— But I now ask you candidly—I ask you to tell me who—I ask you on your word of honor as a gentleman—I ask you to tell me who Sappho was!" And being greatly saddened by his uncertainty, two large tears rolled down his cheeks.

"And *I* ask *you*," replied Peter, no less deeply moved, "to tell *me* candidly—ask *you* to tell

me on *your* word of honor as a gentleman—what I come here for.”

“You’re not going, Peter! Don’t leave me!”

Stafford threw his arms around Peter’s neck and fell on his bosom.

“Peter, who’d you say Sappho was? Who are you? Are you Sappho, Peter? Kiss me, Sappho! Kiss me, Peter——”

“Kiss the devil!” cried Peter, and in a struggle to save what was left of his modesty, he rolled backward to the floor, with Stafford in his arms.

There they lay all night—men drank recklessly and with little reproach in those wild days—and the ball which Stafford had set rolling sped straight on to a goal of which in his long drunken sleep he did not dream.

V.

SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY.

AH, if every faculty of the mind could be trained for the possible battles of life, as a modern nation makes every man a soldier! At all times, a part of these forces will be engaged in active service; often there will be need also of the army in reserve; and God knows that in the life of every man worth the name there are yet other conflicts, when the last defences of land and house and hearth have to be called out, and even then the full strength counts but a brave handful in comparison with the enemy.

At the outset of that same day, John Gray had called out certain first reserves of his nature. Fighting had to be done in two parts of the field—in the school-room and in his private thoughts. He would gladly have shirked the school; but the one compensation he looked

for in doing the disagreeable things of life was to do them in such away that, being done, they could not fester like broken-off thorns in his conscience.

All the forenoon, therefore, by an effort of faithful heroism which only those who have experienced it can ever understand, he crushed himself into that stifling prison-house of the mind where the perplexities and toils of childhood become enormous and everything else in the world grows small. Morning never to be forgotten! Up under the joists there was the terrible struggle of a fly in a web—at first more and more violent, then ceasing in a strain so fine that the ear could scarce take it; a bee came in one window, went out another; a rat, sniffing greedily in its hole, crept toward a crumb under a bench, crept nearer, ran back, crept nearer, seized it, and was gone; a toiling slate-pencil grated on its way as arduously as a wagon up a hill; the sunshine passed out the front door; these were its mightiest happenings.

At noon the oldest of the children wanted to hear about the battle, and he went patiently to the Town Fork and finished the story, telling them that the time would come—perhaps a hundred years thence—when the Kentuckians would assemble on the battle-field and set up a monument to their forefathers; that a thousand years afterward it would still be known—that tragedy of the Blue Licks.

Then through the long afternoon without the slightest faltering, until at last he closed the door behind him with a sense of joyous liberty that seemed like madness.

Night fell, but he would not venture early to see Amy, rather waiting until Kitty and Horatio should have gone to the party. When at last he laid his hand on the latch of the gate, voices reached him from the veranda; they were the voices of Amy and Joseph. Had his nature been suspicious—that sure mark of mental infirmity—he might have accused her of breaking the engagement with this meeting

in view; but, instead, he instantly justified them both. Had not Joseph a right to spend the evening with Amy if he chose, and was it any fault of hers that he did so?

But disappointment cut him keenly as he dropped the latch and walked away, with impatience gnawing at his heart and vague uneasiness settling like a formless depressing cloud about his mind.

For more than an hour he strolled slowly about the dark town—past his school-house, thinking that his teaching days would now soon be over—past Peter's blacksmith shop, thinking what a fresh picture the young fellow always made—past Stafford's editorial room, with the light under the door and the pale, illuminated curtain drawn across the window. He held himself in absolute composure. Two or three times he lingered before show-windows of merchandise, that had started from Philadelphia, gone thence to Pittsburg, thence down the Ohio in flat-boats to Limestone—now Maysville—and thence through the forest on

pack-horses. He had some taste in snuff-boxes, being the inheritor of several from his Scotch and Irish ancestors; and there were a few that he bent over to examine at the new silversmith's, finding them little to his liking. As he passed a tavern, a group of Revolutionary officers were having a time of it over their pipes and memories; and he paused to hear one finish a yarn of pretty strong fibre about the battle of King's Mountain. More than once couples went hurrying by to the party; and there came a moment when down a dark street he fancied that he heard Amy's laughter ring faintly out on the still air.

The Poythress homestead was wrapped in silence and darkness, as he stepped upon the veranda an hour and a half or two hours later, but the door was open, there was a light inside, and by means of this he discovered, lying asleep on the threshold, a half grown lad who was apprentice to the new English silversmith of the town and a lodger at the minister's—the bond of acquaintanceship being the memory of

John Wesley, who had sprinkled the lad's father in England.

Gray laid a hand on his shoulder and tried to break his slumber, which seemed to be enchanted. He opened his eyes at last, looked up at Gray, said, "Nobody at home," and went to sleep again. More thoroughly aroused, he sat up. Mr. and Mrs. Poythress had been called away to some sick person; had asked him to sit up till they came back; he wished they'd come; he didn't see how he was ever to learn how to make watches if he couldn't get any sleep; and he lay down again.

Gray shook him more forcibly.

"Miss Falconer is here; will you tell her I wish to see her?"

The lad didn't open his eyes, but said dreamily:

"She's not here; she's gone to the party."

In an instant Gray had lifted him and set him on his feet. Then he put his hands on his shoulders and shook him resolutely:

"You are asleep! Wake up! You are

dreaming! Wake up! I asked you to tell Miss Falconer I wish to see her. Miss Falconer! Do you hear?"

The lad seized Gray by the arms and shook him with all his might.

"Wake up," he cried. "Be you a sleep-walker? Be you a spectre? I tell you she's gone to the party. Do you hear? She's gone to the party! Now go away, will you? How am I ever to be a silversmith, if I can't get any sleep?" And stretching himself once more on the settee, he closed his eyes.

Over his prostrate body Gray stood as rigid and motionless as a sentinel beside the dead. Then he turned straight to the home of the Wilkinsons. His gait was not hurried; whatever his face may have expressed was hidden by the darkness. He did not allow himself to think. The tense quietude of his mind was like that of a summer tree not one of whose thousands of leaves quivers along the edge, but toward which a tempest of great winds is rolling in the distance.

The house was set close to the street. The windows were open; long bars of light fell out upon the sidewalks; as he stepped forward into one of these, the fiddlers struck up "Sir Roger De Coverley"; the company parted in long lines to the right and left, leaving a vacant space down the middle of the room; and into this vacant space he saw Joseph lead Amy, and the two begin to dance.

She wore a white muslin dress—a little skilful work had restored its freshness—a blue silk coat of the loveliest hue, a wide white lace tucker caught across her bosom with a bunch of cinnamon roses, and straw-colored kid gloves, reaching far up her snow-white arms. Her hair was coiled high on the crown of her head and airily overtopped by a great curiously carved tortoise-shell comb; and from under her dress peeped the white mice of her feet. The tints of her skin were like those of pearl and rose; her red lips parted in smiles; her eyes sparkled. She was radiant in beauty—radiant with unexpected happiness and ex-

citement; and she moved through the curves and turns of Sir Roger with a hundred little airs and graces that marked the deep intoxication of her delight.

He did not see her dress; he did not recognize the garments that he had hung on the wall of his room; he would not have known it had she worn massed on her head the gems of the East. Perhaps he did not even see *her* after the first instant of recognition; what he did see and continued to see was the hard, merciless fact that she was there and dancing with Joseph, his friend.

If a man should discover a rattlesnake coiled in his path some yards ahead, and then should deliberately get down upon his stomach and grovel toward it with slow contortions—nearer—always nearer, until the hiss was heard—nearer, until the flat head was drawn backward and the fangs buried in his very brow—he could not have been more horribly, more miserably stung. The wound that Gray believed dealt him was the one in the world that could

have hurt him most. For a minute he had the sense of being poisoned, as though an actual venom were coursing through his blood. There was one swift backward movement of his mind over the chain of forerunning events.

"She is a little venomous serpent!" he said aloud, with a tone of deep, solemn anger. "And I have been crawling in the dust." Then he walked quietly into the house.

In another room he found his host and hostess. As he turned from them, the young lady who had borrowed his "Romeo and Juliet" came forward on the arm of her father, to thank him for his kindness, and to say that she liked the balcony scene best of all, but would rather have been left alone in the garden with Mercutio than with any one else. Then she asked, looking at him with sympathetic surprise, whether he had himself just made a visit to Romeo's apothecary's. He crossed to where a group of elderly gentlemen were talking with much gayety. The central one, a man of great bearing—indeed, one of the most

remarkable characters that were brought together during this period within the town—took and held his hand with affectionate warmth.

“We had remarked you as you came in,” he said, in a rich voice, bending upon Gray a look half quizzical, half warning, “and the sight had inspired me to propound a conundrum. It would be well for the company to take snuff before my conundrum is asked, so that if it is a bad one it may be sneezed at.” And he offered his snuff-box. “Why is the law like a leech? Because if applied continuously to the temples it abstracts from the patient too much blood. Marshall tells me that of late Gray has been teaching till sunset and then reading law till sunrise; and to-night he comes here with his eyes blazing and his skin as pallid and dry as a monk’s. Take off the leeches for a good month, John! If the Senate ratifies in June the treachery of Jay and Lord Granville, there will be more work than ever for the Democratic Societies in this

country, and nowhere more than in Kentucky. We shall need you then more than the law needs you now, or than you need it. Save yourself for the cause of your tricolor."

"We shall soon put him beyond the reach of the law," said a member of the Transylvania Library Committee. "As soon as his school is out, we are going to send him to ask subscriptions from the President, the Vice-President, and others, and then on to Philadelphia to buy the books."

A shadow fell upon the face of the other speaker, and in a lowered tone he said, with cold emphasis:

"I am sorry that the citizens of this town should stoop to ask *anything* from such a man as George Washington."

A hand touched Gray's elbow from behind. He turned and saw Kitty and Horatio. Kitty's black eyes were sparkling with delight, and her cheeks were like red poppies.

"Have you seen them?" she cried. "Have you seen Amy and Joseph? They are in the

other room. They expected to find you here when they came. Haven't they told you everything? Aren't you glad? But we will lose our places!" and, with a motion to Horatio, she hurried toward the room where the music was heard to begin.

“We are entered for this purse-race,” said Mr. Turpin, pausing a moment to drop his witicism confidentially into Gray's ear. “Weight for age agreeable to the rules of New Market—three mile heats—best two in three. Each subscriber to pay one guinea, and every person that enters a horse” (here tapping himself proudly on the breast) “to pay two guineas, including his subscription.” And with this Mr. Turpin, casting at Gray a look of technical appreciation, hurried after Kitty. Gallant Horatio! He was known as one of the rising young turfmen of the town, having the October previous won a race on his b. c. Taps, by Craps, dam Draps—the rival horse being the s. f. Mulberry, by Blackberry, dam Hackberry.

Once afterward Gray's glance fell on Amy and Joseph across the room. They were looking at him and plainly laughing at his expense, and the sight burnt his eyes. They beckoned gayly, but he gave no sign; and in a moment they were lost behind the shifting figures of the company. While he was dancing, however, Joseph came up and whispered:

"As soon as you get away, Amy wants to see you. She says come at once."

Half an hour later he came a second time and drew Gray aside from a group of gentlemen, speaking more seriously:

"Amy wants to explain how all this happened. Come at once."

"Explain!" said Gray, with indifference. "What is there to explain?"

Joseph answered reproachfully:

"This is foolish, John! When you know what has passed between Amy and me, you will not censure her. And *I* could not have done otherwise." Despite his wish to be serious, he could not help laughing.

But to John Gray these simple words went for the very thing they did not mean. His mind had been rudely forced to a false point of view; and from a false point of view the truth itself always looks false. It was intolerable that Joseph should be defending to him the very woman whom a few hours before he had hoped to marry.

"There is no explanation needed from her," he replied, with the same indifference. "I think I understand her. What I do not understand I am willing to take for granted. But *you*, Joseph, *you* owe me an explanation, though this is not the place to give it." His face twitched with a nervous spasm, and he knotted the fingers of his large hands together like twisted bands of iron.

Joseph fixed his quiet, honest eyes on Gray's, and then, without speaking, turned away.

Still later Gray met her while dancing—the faint rose of her cheeks a shade deeper, the dazzling whiteness of her skin if possible more pearl-like with warmth, her gayety and happi-

ness at their height. He had to touch her hand; but he would have passed her without recognition, only with an air of injured vanity she said:

"You haven't asked me to dance to-night. You haven't even let me tell you why I came with Joseph. I didn't want you to know at first why I broke my engagement with you, but everybody will know it soon. Joseph would tell you, if I didn't." And, with the thought of her lost bundle, she danced on, smiling at him with the manner of one who is at peace with the whole world.

Still, he did not show that he even heard what she said; and although they did not directly meet again, he was made aware that a change had at last come over her. She was angry now. He could hear her laughter oftener—laughter that was meant for his ear—and she was dancing oftener with Joseph. All at once revulsion overtook him.

"I am playing a part by staying here!" he said with inward shame, and left the house.

After some two hours of blind wandering around the town, drawn back by ungovernable impulse, he passed by it again. There she was, unwearied and satisfied in that little world of lights and music, laughter and endless rhythmic motion. She really *was* happy, not feigning; she really had no more been affected by what had happened between them than a wall is affected by the shadow of a filmy insect darting between it and a candle.

The first air of dawn stirred the leaves of the trees overhead and touched his hot forehead. He walked slowly to his room, dropped into a chair by his open window, and sat looking absently toward the east. A man on horseback rode whistling by. It was Stafford's post-rider, but John had forgotten to write his letters. By unseen degrees the east turned from pale gray to molten pearl, from pearl to glowing crimson, and then became blue under the high sun; the first low twitter of a bird became a full song, and one song became a general chorus, which reached its fullest outpouring of

harmony, then lessened and ceased ; the earliest sound of human life in the town became the general morning stir ; from the playground not far away was heard the voice of one child, of two, of many, loudly commingling.

The familiar noise connected itself with duty. He looked at his watch. It was the hour to open the school ; and he got up and walked to it, unaware that all this time he had not moved from his chair by the window or taken off his hat.

VI.

ONE OF THE WEIRD SISTERS.

BLEAR-EYED little Jennie drew fearful tomahawks all the next morning; and about eleven o'clock the wee chubby-cheeked urchin, having at long intervals dropped a pencil, a slippery-elm whistle, a yellow muffin with a surprising incision on one side, and then his spelling-book, at last fell to the floor with a soft heavy thud himself, having gone to sleep in unoccupied despair on the hard end of his high perch.

As Gray was walking across the public square at noon and approaching the Sign of the Indian Queen, adjoining the two locust-trees, from the blacksmith-shop issued the sounds of a horse kicking violently against the back door of the shop, and of a pleasant voice raised in still more violent remonstrance;

and when he came opposite, he saw Peter standing at a prudent distance from a forlorn, vicious, and passion-hearted beast, with a nick in her left ear, a swelling in the groin, a blaze in her forehead, and a white hind-foot.

Peter, who, however occupied, always kept a social eye on the street, caught sight of him, and immediately threw up one sturdy bare arm as a sign for him to stop. Gray, being in no mood for talking, would have passed on, but Peter cried out, with bluff imperativeness, "Stop! will you?" and walking out to the street, planted himself squarely before Gray and looked him straight in the eyes. Peter's own eyes were red and rather swollen, and his temper had been stirred.

"There's one question I've got to ask you," he said. "If you answer it the wrong way, you can walk on, and Peter Springle's not the man ever to ask you to stop at his door again. But if you answer it the right way, then I've got something else to say to you, that I'm thinking you'll want to hear. Did you ever

tell anybody that Jerry Neave was the best blacksmith in this town?"

"No," answered Gray, quietly and wonderingly. "I don't know who *is* the best, but, from all I hear, I've always thought *you* were the best, Peter."

"I knowed he was *lying*! I knowed he was *lying*!" exclaimed Peter, who seemed to stand in need of double emphasis; and, wiping his grimy right hand on his leather apron, he held it out warmly. "Now step inside and set down on my bench a minute. You lost a shoe last night, and you've been going lame ever since, and you're getting lamer every minute. I knowed it as soon as I caught sight of you; and in five minutes I'm going to put a new shoe on you that'll set you travelling at a gait you never struck before. I'm the only man to do it, and I'm the only man that can shoe Jack Barnett's Sappho!" And turning round, Peter shook his head with a menace at the mare, who now stood in deceptive quietude. Then Peter, seating himself close to Gray, for whom

he had much affection, laid bare the whole of Stafford's deception.

Near the front door of the shop stood a huge walnut-tree, with wide-spreading branches, wearing the fresh plumes of late May—plumes that hung down over the doors and across the windows, leaving the cool interior suffused with a soft twilight of green and brown shadows. A shaft of sunbeams, penetrating a crevice in the blackened roof above, fell on the white neck of a yellow collie that lay on the ground with his head on his paws but with his eyes fixed reproachfully on the heels of the mare, while one of his ears was turned back toward his master. Beside him a box had been kicked over, and its contents of tools and shoes scattered. A faint line of blue smoke sagged from the dying coals of the forge toward the door, creeping across the anvil, bright as if tipped with silver. And in one of the darkest corners of the shop, near a bucket of water in which floated a huge brown gourd, Peter and John sat on a rough bench, while the tale was

begun and finished. It was told by Peter with much rubbing of his elbows in the palms of his hands and much smoothing of his apron over his knees; and it was heard by John Gray almost without breath or motion. At times a cloud, passing beneath the sun, threw the whole shop into heavier shadow; and then his dark figure faded into the tone of the blackened wall behind him, and only his face, with the contrast of its white linen collar below and the barely discernible lights of his auburn hair above—his face, proud, resolute, sincere, pallid, suffering—started out of the gloom like a portrait from an old-time canvas.

He listened as one may listen to a reprieve from sentence of death. The web of deceptive circumstances that had been spun across his vision was torn away by a single movement of the hand. He caught Peter's hand in a vice, looked into his eyes for a moment, and went out.

Peter watched him as he hurried away.

"I knowed he wouldn't go lame!" he said,

with fine satisfaction. "I knowed the shoe'd fit him!"

When the school was dismissed, Gray soon left the town behind him on his rapid way to the Falconers'. Amy, as he learned, had gone home during the morning.

From the moment of the night before, when, standing on the street and looking in at her as she danced with Joseph, he had said, "She shall never trouble me again"—from that moment his one resolution had been to put her away forever from his thoughts. During the rest of the evening at the Wilkinsons' he had been inwardly busy with the one duty of making this purpose more and more secure, as a determined workman examines and re-examines and drives yet a little further home some great bolt of iron. During all the hours after he had gone home, as he sat at his window while the night passed, and dawn came, and then full day, and the opening of the school, his mind had never been able to get away from that new starting-point. During the hours of

the morning school there had always been that one ceaseless going over within himself of the same little formula. And when at last noon came, and in passing Peter's shop he had out of mere good-will consented to listen to Peter's confidence, his thoughts still strove that wretched way.

But sometimes, in walking through a land, one will come upon a bridge that has been thrown across a stream, and, pausing and looking down, will observe how the water passes under with a dark, deep, silent current, and then a few feet below flows out in sunlit rippling shallows that are full of melody. It was thus that the current of John Gray's thoughts were transformed by Peter's story. He had gone out of the shop, feeling as if he had passed from under some chill gloomy archway out beneath the glad blue firmament, and his whole mind had become a thousand commingling and disappearing whirlpools of joyous emotion.

And thus, as he now hurried on to the Falconers', keeping that straight course through

the forest which he had taken a few afternoons before, he restored her again to stainless supremacy over his imagination.

“And if I have wronged her, have I not suffered for it? Have I not suffered?”

A deeper tumult of joyous emotions surged in him as he drew near the house.

“At last!” he murmured. “At last I shall see her and make myself understood. No more delay now! No more misunderstanding! Amy! Amy! Amy! At last! At last!”

He passed the nearest field, passed the garden where on Tuesday he had talked with Mrs. Falconer, passed into the yard beyond, and took the garden path toward the house.

“Where shall I find her? Where shall I find her alone?”

Between himself and the house there stood a separate building of logs and plaster. It was a single room used for the spinning and the weaving, of which she had charge. Many a time he had sat on the great oaken chest into which the homespun cloth was stored while she

sat by her spinning-wheel; at many a Saturday twilight they had whispered their parting here, he with an ache in his heart for the time to come when he could ask her to be his wife.

“If she should only be in the weaving-room!”

The sun was setting. The work of the day was done. He knew that as he came up, because no sound was heard inside. But as he stepped around to the front, the door stood open, and he advanced on noiseless tiptoe to the entrance and looked in.

She was standing near the middle of the room, with her face turned from him. On one side of the room were the spinning-wheels, and farther on a loom; before her was a table on which was piled the cloth ready to be folded away; on the other the great open chest, into which she was about to store it. But in the act she had paused, and now stood motionless, caught in some trance of revery, with her hands clasped behind her head.

At the sight of her, with the remorseful thought of how he had mistreated and mis-

judged her and the victorious sense that the moment for which he had waited so long was come at last, he stepped forward in a passion of tenderness and threw out his arms and folded them around her. She put up hers and clasped them around his neck, drawing him yet closer, and letting her head nestle against his neck and her hair brush his cheek.

Thus for a minute they stood, and he held his breath, and his heart knocked like a stone against his side.

"Uncle Falconer," she said at length, as if still but half awakened out of her thoughts, "this is the last linen I will ever weave for you. To-morrow I shall begin to weave for my own home."

He bent his head quickly down and kissed her.

She struggled out of his arms with a cry of fear and surprise, and, having turned, confronted him with her figure drawn to its full height, her lips parted and trembling, and her lovely eyes filling with passion, cold, angry,

and resentful. But the words she might have spoken went unsaid; for he made a gesture that kept her silent.

"Wait, Amy!" he cried in a tone that she had never heard. "Listen to me first!"

Of all expressions ever worn by the poor human face there are two that never deceive—the look of death and the look of love. From the face of death all hopes, all passions, all joys, all wrongs, have vanished, leaving only that external calm which is the pale deceptive mask of swift change and eternal dissolution. Into the face of love all passions and hopes, life, the world, the soul, destiny, the dream of immortality, the joy of heaven, meet in one confession, one prayer—the supreme prayer of the heart that it may live and die, not in God, but in another heart erring and mortal like itself.

He was standing by the door-way. A small window in the opposite wall of the low room opened toward the west. Through this the crimson light caught from the far-off radiance of the heavens streamed in and fell upon his

face, cruelly revealing a pallor, a storm of feelings, a struggle for calmness. It fell upon his hair, touching it with a beauty almost beyond nature.

She stood a few yards off, with her face toward him and in shadow. As she stepped backward, one of her hands had struck against her spinning-wheel, and now lightly rested on it; with the other she had caught the edge of the table. From the spinning wheel a thread of flax trailed to the ground; on the table near her hand lay a pair of iron shears.

He was a scholar; and as he now stood looking at her thus confronting him in cold, half-shadowy anger—at the spinning-wheel with its trailing flax and the table with its iron shears—at her hands stretched forth as if about to grasp the one and to lay hold on the other—from that necessity which in some states of extraordinary excitement forces the mind to a conscious apprehension of things the most trivial or irrelevant, there came to him in one incredibly swift flash of unhappy association the

thought that he stood in the presence of the very figure of Fate. But the fancy passed with incredible swiftness and was succeeded by another—the thought of her youth and loveliness. She wore a dress of coarse but snow-white homespun, narrow in the skirt, and fitting close to her arms and neck and to the outlines of her form. Her hair was parted simply over her low beautiful brow and caught in two large braids behind. Not a ribbon, not a trifle, not a semblance of vanity or whim; so that in that primitive, stern, stark, fearless revelation of itself her figure had the frankness of a masterpiece of nature, draped only as a concession to taste.

He began to explain how for the sake of annoying them both Stafford had stooped to petty spiteful deception.

“If I was unfeeling with you,” he said, “only consider the circumstances! You had broken your engagement with me without giving a reason; I saw you at the party dancing with Joseph; I believed myself miserable,

cruelly trifled with and dishonored. I said that if you could treat me in that way there was nothing you could say that I cared to hear. I was blind to the truth; I believe I was blinded by suffering."

As he spoke, the anger died out of her face, but in its stead came something worse—a look of hardness, and something that was worse still—a look of indifference.

"If you suffered, it was your own fault," she replied, calm as a judge. "I wanted to explain to you why I broke my engagement and why I went with Joseph: you refused to allow me. You refused even to speak to me."

"But, Amy, before that! Remember that I had gone to see you the night before. You had a chance to explain then. But you did not explain: you laughed. Still, I did not doubt that your reason was good. I did not ask you to state it. But when I saw you at the party with Joseph, was I not right, Amy, was I not right, in thinking that the time for explanation had passed?"

"No," she replied, severely. "As long as I did not give any reason, you ought not to have asked for one; but when I wished to give it, you should have been ready to hear it."

He drew himself up quickly, like a man who wishes to be done with a thing.

"This is a poor pitiful misunderstanding!" he cried, "it is unworthy of us. I say, forgive me! We will let it pass. I had thought each of us was wrong—you at first, and I afterward."

"I was not wrong either first or last!" she interposed, firmly.

"You think so, because you do not understand, because you do not dream of the truth, because you do not know how I have felt and what I have suffered! Amy, you know that I have loved you for a long time—a long, long time. You could never have acted toward me as you have, if you had not known this. And that night—the night you would not see me alone—I went to ask you to marry me. I meant to ask you last night. I am here to ask you now."

He did not stop. He told her of the necessity that had kept him from speaking sooner, of the recent change in his life which now for the first time made it possible. He told her how he had waited and planned for this hour, and had shaped his whole future with the thought that she would share it.

While she listened, her head had dropped slightly forward. She now lifted it, and said with deliberation:

“And what right had you to be so sure all this time that I would marry you whenever you asked me? What right had you to take it for granted that whenever you were ready I would be?”

He could easily have said that she had given him the right to feel confident. Between them had passed many things which, had she loved him, would have been pardonably natural, but which, if she had not loved him, would have been in his eyes a fatal blemish on the delicacy of her womanhood. As therefore she now, in dealing him a wound, unknowingly dealt a

worse one to herself, the blood rushed into his face, and, with a pitiful sense of being doubly wronged, he drew himself up again—a little proudly, perhaps.

“I have only *hoped* ! I loved you. I could not love you without hoping. I could not hope without planning. The hoping, the planning, the striving, the waiting—everything!—it was all in the fact that I loved you!” And then he waited, looking down on her in silence.

She had grown nervous. She had stooped to pick up the thread of flax from the ground, and was passing it slowly between her fingers, her eyes following it. When he spoke again, his voice showed that he shook like a man with a chill:

“I have said all that I can say. I have offered you all that I have to offer. It is what in myself I have always held most dear and sacred; it is my heart! I am waiting.”

Still the silence lasted, for the awe that fell upon her. At length she covertly lifted her frightened eyes to him, as though she were

looking up to a higher level than the one she stood on. She saw a certain proud incredible beauty of tenderness and pain in his face, and his eyes searched her with a questioning earnestness beyond anything that she had ever dreamed of. She quickly dropped her head; she shifted her position; a band seemed to tighten around her throat; until, in a voice hardly to be heard and that was itself a confession of error, the words faltered forth:

“I have promised to marry Joseph.”

He did not speak or move, but continued to stand leaning against the lintel of the doorway and looking down on her; but, as plainly as the color was fading from the sky, his face grew ashen white.

She had caught up the iron shears in her distraction and begun to cut the flaxen thread; and, in the silence of the room, only the rusty click was now heard, as she clipped it, clipped it, clipped it.

Then such a fit of trembling seized her that she laid the shears back upon the table. Still

he did not move or speak, and there seemed to fall upon her an insupportable burden, until, as if by no will of her own, she spoke again, voluntarily—pitifully:

“I didn’t know that you cared so much for me. It isn’t *my* fault. You had never *asked* me, and he had already asked me twice.”

He changed his position quickly, and the last light, coming in through the window, no longer fell upon his face and betrayed it. But she was aware that he was looking, not at her, but through and through her. All at once his voice broke through the darkness, so unlike itself that she started:

“Tell me one thing; when did you give him this promise? I have no right to ask you; but, for reasons you could not perhaps understand, it would be kind of you to tell me. When did you give him this promise?”

She answered, as if by no will of her own:

“Last night—as we were going home.”

She waited until she felt that she would sink to the ground with weakness. Then, as if he

had bent his head down so close to hers that it touched her and yet did not touch her—so close that his warm breath was on her forehead—she felt rather than heard him say, as if to himself, not to her—

“Good-by!”

He passed like a tall spirit out of the door, and she heard his footsteps die along the pathway,—die slowly away, as of one who goes never to return.

Then she covered her face with her hands, and through her fingers streamed the first bitter tears of her young womanhood.

VII.

MORE EDITORIAL SECRETS.

It was now about the middle of Saturday afternoon. On Friday—the morning after the party—Stafford had ridden on business to Frankfort; but before setting out he had learned of the success of his scheme and of Gray's angry discomfiture.

The incident furnished him food for pleasant rumination during his long ride to and from the capital; and, being now on his ride home, he was gayly considering how he might still further annoy the school-master, when at a sharp turn in the road—the spot being about a mile from Lexington—he came suddenly upon Gray himself, who was lying under a clump of saplings some yards ahead. Aroused by the sound of the horse's feet, he sprang up, and on seeing

Stafford walked out into the middle of the road and waited. He had taken off his hat and coat and waistcoat, and his trousers were girt around him like some workman's who has trimmed himself for neat, quick, violent action.

At the sight of him, Stafford's face took on at first a puzzled look. Then his eye lit up with a flash of joyous exultation. He was not a coward; his passions, though soon exhausting themselves, were terrible while they lasted; and on the supposition that the school-master now showed fight, he welcomed the chance of settling a good many private grudges. And what a thing to tell at the Indian Queen, at the Spinning-Wheel, at the Virginia Arms, at the Sheaf of Wheat!

When Gray placed himself in the middle of the road, Stafford's horse was moving along on one side. With a twist of the curb he now put it in a bee-line with Gray's figure, meaning to force a fight if none were offered. Gray stood still until the horse's head was within

arm's length; then he quietly laid hold of the bridle-reins, and, throwing the whole weight of his body forward, brought it to an abrupt stop.

"Loose my horse!" cried Stafford, furious.
"Loose my horse! What do you mean?"

"Get down," said Gray. His tone was quiet and his face pale. He had the manner of a man who is compelled to do a disagreeable thing, but means to do it thoroughly and with all his might. "Get down. I don't believe you are a coward; but I mean to settle this matter now and here, and I'll not give you any chance to escape. Get down and make ready in any way you like."

"Escape! Oh, ho! *Escape!* Young school-master, where's your little hickory switch? Have you brought it with you? Is it hidden down your boot-leg? Have you brought one of the little pine paddles which your boys use to paddle yellow butterflies with on the common? *Escape!*"

"I have but one thing to say to you," replied

Gray. "When I punish a boy, I tell him what I do it for. I am going to punish you for your lying and mischief-making interference in my affairs. You may be the better man. But I know one thing: before you whip me I will punish you for that. That's all. I'll give you five minutes to get down and strip if you wish. If you are not down by that time, I'll jerk you off your horse."

Stafford had a heavy riding-whip in his hand. He threw it into the air and caught it by the light end.

"Excuse me," he said, "I do not hurry through my pleasures. I have several things to say. But, meanwhile, if in one minute's time you don't take your hand off my bridle-bit, I'll lay the butt of this whip on your head."

"Will you get down?"

"Let go, I say!"

With the spring of a wild-cat Gray leaped toward Stafford's saddle-bow to seize the whip; but Stafford with an upward movement of his

arm equally quick threw it high over his head. Then he raised himself in his stirrups and brought it down with all his might. Gray saw it coming, and swerved so that it grazed his ear but fell on his neck at the shoulder—a coarse, ugly blow, cutting into the flesh. A smothered growl of rage and pain—the sound that the human being makes when the ancient wild beast lying in the lair of the heart is aroused at last—broke from him. With another spring he seized the whip before it could fall again, flung it away, caught Stafford by the wrist, and, throwing his whole weight backward, planted a foot against the horse's shoulder and dragged Stafford off. As he fell, the saddle turned, the horse sprang aside, and Gray lost his balance and fell backward in the road, pulling Stafford heavily on him.

The horse, with bridle-reins broken, and the saddle hanging under its belly, was found grazing on the lower edge of the common by three boys who had gone thither to fish for

perch in the Town Fork, and led to the public square.

Those were still such perilous times that when a man rode from settlement to settlement there were chances of his never being seen again. The news instantly drew to the spot the townspeople, excited, sad, and fearful; and half an hour later a company of his friends, well mounted and well armed, rode rapidly out of town in the direction of Frankfort.

At a turn in the road they came upon Stafford, sitting by the roadside. He started to his feet, as though he would have hidden in the bushes, and a flush dyed his face. And when they rode up, and, jumping from their horses, pressed him with questions, he seemed under great excitement and unable to give an account of what had happened. But a moment later he regained control of himself.

"Give me a little time!" he cried, beginning to shake hands all around. "Give me a little time, and congratulate me! If you'd been five minutes sooner, we'd have had him! Oh, I'm

not *hurt*! I'm bruised. But why *didn't* you come five minutes sooner! We'd have had him, and I'd have had the reward in my pocket." And Stafford told his story.

For some months the government had been advertising in the papers for two deserters,—one James Booze, a Virginian, and one John Music, born in Surry County, North Carolina.

"As I was riding along," said Stafford, "and just as I got opposite that little clump of saplings over yonder, I saw a man asleep under them. That looked strange. A man doesn't go to sleep on the roadside in this part of the country without a rifle; and this fellow had no rifle. And then all at once it struck me that he might be one of these deserters; and so I rode up, and there was my man—that same John Music! I recognized him in a minute, because, you see, I'd read the description of him in the *Pioneer* till I knew it by heart: 'About twenty-two years old; five feet five and a half inches high; of a light complexion, gray eyes, black hair; remarkably well made and uncommonly

handsome; a silent well-behaved man; wrist of right arm dislocated; wearing a fine fur hat, not much worn, with black binding and yellow sweat-leather; a brown-colored cloth coat with rolling collar and round yellow buttons; a pair of dove-colored corduroy pantaloons, edged with blue and split across the knees.' Oh, I knew him! And beside him a big bundle of clothing—military shirts, shoes, and socks—belonging to soldiers of the United States army. So said I to myself, 'You're my prisoner, Mr. John Music!' and I slipped off my horse and crept toward him. But he heard me and jumped up, and in another minute we had clinched and were at it, rolling over and over like two hedgehogs doubled into one. And then we were on our feet, and then we clinched and were down again, and then on our feet and at it with our fists and down again, on our feet and down again. For, I can tell you, Mr. John Music didn't mean to be arrested by a scarecrow. They said he was quiet and well behaved. I might admit that he was well-

behaved; but I failed to see that he was remarkably quiet! And as for a dislocated wrist—phew! But I was getting the best of him, when the fellow hit me a cunning blow that knocks the breath out of me for a minute; and then he turns and seizes his bundle, and takes to his heels for life itself—me after him. But it was no use. In a hundred yards he was three hundred yards ahead, and then off he darts into the cane—lost. For a man can't ride through that thicket; and catch him on foot!—you might as well whistle to a snipe!"

But the town soon knew that the fight had been between Stafford and Gray, as well as all the circumstances preceding, and the incident gave rise to varied comment.

Mr. Horatio Turpin, a few days later, while sitting in Peter's shop, cutting with a hickory switch at a huge spur on his jack-boot heel, and even forgetting for the moment how well he looked in a green coatee and thunder-and-lightning waistcoat, was especially warm over the affair.

"I call it a beastly shame," he argued, "for a fellow to go off and whip another fellow because some other fellow has beat him with a gyerl. If John Gray wanted to fight anybody, why didn't he fight Joe Holden? Suppose that when I entered Taps, by Craps, dam Draps, in the purse-race last October, against Mulberry, by Hackberry, dam Blackberry—suppose, I say, that Mulberry had beaten Taps—although you really *can't* suppose such a thing, you know—would I have gone off and whipped Jack Barnett for owning Sappho, sire and dam unknown? No, sir! Would I have gone off and whipped the owner of Mulberry? No, sir! I wouldn't have whipped anybody."

"You never spoke a truer word, Turpin," observed Peter, who was sitting astride his anvil-block, rapidly turning out horseshoe-nails, which he let drop in the dust at his feet. "You never spoke a truer word. *Whoever* whips *you*, you'll never whip nobody!"

As Peter said this, he got up and walked over to Mr. Turpin, holding out to him his

hammer, on the flat side of which lay two nails.

"Now, here are two nails," said Peter, "and they're as like as like can be. But pick up one and look at its head."

"Well," said Mr. Turpin, doing so, "there's nothing funny I see about its head."

"Yes; but look at the head of the other one," said Peter.

Mr. Turpin picked up the other nail, but instantly let it drop and shook his fingers violently.

"That's the difference!" said Peter, with a twinkle; "and I know some people who are the same way. You see 'em together, and they look exactly alike. Then you try to fool with one, and you can do it; then you try to fool with the other, and you can't! The school-master didn't whip Stafford because Holden beat him with a 'gyerl,' as you call it."

But it accorded with the generous, manly temper of the rough period that the plan was at once laid to reconcile the two men; and a

week had not passed before they were decoyed one night into the same inn, and made to shake hands and drink a bowl of sagamity.

Nor was the reconciliation hard to either. Stafford had been severely whipped, but then he had perhaps annoyed Gray for the rest of life; and he would have taken the whipping for the sake of the joke. Gray, having punished Stafford, had nothing further against him; moreover, his mind was absorbed in graver thoughts.

And it was well that they should be at peace. For, several days later, Stafford, in mounting a vicious horse of Turpin's, got badly thrown; and Gray was one of the first young men of the town to take a nightly place at his bedside. A week later, when the last darkness was settling upon him, he reached for Gray's hand and laid it on his lips—not more gently had it been a woman's. The action was one of those which will perhaps be better explained in a better world than this; but it brought quick hot tears to the eyes of John Gray, as he bent over and kissed him.

VIII.

THE LAST OF SCHOOL-DAYS.

THE last of village school-days a hundred years ago! The very words tinkle as drowsily on the ear as the sounds of distant sheep-bells heard in a dream—full of peace, full of the thoughts of cool green pastures to wander in all the summer long.

But every morning John Gray asked himself the question, Would the last of school-days never come? He was much like a palm-tree: his nature strove to bear its fruit and leaves high in the air and to have no soiled and drooping branches. But, if one may trust scant tradition, there is reason to believe that about this time he had the look of a vigorous plant which has been badly tampered with at the root.

Certainly when night fell upon the little

town of eight or ten hundred people, and the wild, hardy life expressed itself at the taverns and the inns—when the pipes were glowing, and the bowls flowing—there was not a pipe that did not say to some cup that the school-master was a pretty sick man, if he *was* making a brave fight not to let anybody know it; and then pipe and cup had a laugh together—sturdy, rollicking, but not unfriendly. For every man thinks more of every man who is in love; but every man privately laughs at every man who is disappointed: he will sympathize, yes!—but in the depths of his soul he will laugh.

By the custom of the time, engagements were short and stripped of secrecy; and at once it grew public that Joseph was to marry Amy. It became divulged, also, that on the very day after her betrothal to him she had been asked in wedlock by John Gray; and it was said that this information came from Kitty Poythress, though how Kitty could have learned it was never conjectured.

The date of the wedding was fixed for the last of June; and at once Joseph had fallen to work upon a house for himself, that he might have it in readiness. He was a well-made young fellow, strong of limb and lung and purpose, and steady and gentle-hearted. In Kentucky at that period a young man did whatever work was needed; and having come to the wilderness to seek his fortunes—no less than to follow the Falconers, for his passion had been an old trouble with Joseph—he had become a carpenter in the stress of his poverty. Later on, when he became possessed of a town lot with a house of his own on it, he meant to follow the business of locating disputed land-grants; and he fancied that he would not mind dying in extreme old age as a fat justice of the peace.

Joseph had his town lot now; but if among a people who were nothing if not frank and social there was the custom that a man must not woo in secret, there was another custom that he must not be left to build his house alone.

So the pipes and the cups got together again one night, and both were a little more fiery than usual; and a few days later, into the town from this direction and from that direction came wagons out of the forests, hauling the logs for the young fellow's house. And when the logs had been hauled and made ready, there was another meeting of the pipes and cups, still more fiery, still more full; and the next morning, with a great deal of loud laughter, and the writhing of tough backs, and the straining of powerful arms and legs, men old, middle-aged, and young raised the house, like overgrown boys at play, and then went about their own neglected business: so that to him was left only the finishing.

On the stillness of the school-room across the square often broke the noises of hammer and saw; and at other times Gray could hear the music of "Sir Roger De Coverley," whistled low, as if not to reach his ears.

Joseph and he had been good friends by many of those bonds that suffice to hold men together,

especially as members of the Democratic Club; but after what had passed between Amy and himself, his peculiar standard of womanly conduct in such a matter left him no honest room to congratulate a friend on marrying her. Joseph observed this silence with surprise, setting it down to the motive which is usually the one in sight; and Gray perceived how he was misjudged; but there was no possibility of his explaining, and he had to bear the charge of harboring a grudge.

Peter came one night to comfort John, who, according to his technical phrase, was now going lame on all-fours; and he did his best to create diverting conversation. God knows he did his worst likewise; for, having tested one topic after another and found Gray polite in all but interested in none, Peter, from a soft-hearted motive, fell into a weakness and then into a lightness and then into a moral giddiness and then into an open lie. But a greater Peter once lied for a worse reason, and was forgiven. Nevertheless the lie Peter now gave

vent to was undeniably of that nature which comes easy in the telling, it being the history of his own rise in the business of blacksmithing—how he was born in New Jersey, how his father had been a blacksmith before him, how that father had shod General Washington's favorite horse just before the battle of Trenton, and how, he, Peter himself, then a small but intelligent lad, had watched the battle from a floating cake of ice exactly the shape of a horse-shoe.

Gray certainly looked interested at last, and Peter rose to leave in the flush of success.

"You know what else I *want* to say, John, and you know I can't say it; and that's all I've got to say!" he remarked as he went away sorrowfully rubbing his elbows.

There dwelt in the town an Episcopal parson by the name of the Reverend James Moore; and, tidings of the affair having reached his long-attentive ear, oftener than once in passing John upon the street he had loitered to inquire

absently for his health and press upon him a dreamy invitation to be social. So that, rather with a wish not to seem unappreciative than from the hope of finding in the parson any actual flesh and blood companionship, Gray one night knocked at the widow Spurlock's door. Curiously admitted by her, and rather jealously allowed to climb the stairs to her lodger's room, he walked in upon the student of belles-lettres, logic, metaphysics, and moral philosophy with the regretful sense that he was rudely breaking in upon consecrated labors.

The parson sat before a common table strewn with books and sermons; on one side of his face the candle, on the other the Magic Flute; and it is doubtful whether the latter, although opaque, did not do more than its half in illuminating his shadowy countenance.

When Gray entered, he rose gracefully; but the meeting itself was shy, even blundering; and after resuming his seat, he bent his blinking eyes with polite confusion on his visitor, in the effort to divine what on earth could pos-

sibly have brought him there; for he had forgotten his own invitations.

Seeing this, Gray thought it best to recall the fact to his memory; and therefore he remarked how greatly these invitations had been appreciated, and with what pleasure he had this evening ventured to accept one.

“Ah! Yes, yes!” murmured the parson, in tones of silvery reassurance. “It is perfectly true: I *did* invite you; and I am glad you have come. I had desired to speak with you about your trouble as one of the forms of—Evil.” He drew his chair closer to the table and let his cheek rest in the palm of one long thin white hand, the fingers of which hid themselves in the overhanging mass of his pale-brown hair; with the other he softly stroked the Flute. On his face rested a look of comingled resignation and compassion.

“All of us have our sorrows,” he began, “and the sorrow of each is so perfectly adapted to hurt *him*! I sometimes liken the human race to an endless caravan of camels travelling

across a desert, each camel having a sore on his hump, and the load of each being exactly so placed as to rub that sore. For instance—and you will excuse the personal reference—my sorrows are my own; to another they would seem imaginary. Only observe how my actual troubles are piled high on this table before my very eyes! Here is a treatise on metaphysics that is like the affliction of total deafness; here is a work on moral philosophy that is a positive wound in my side; here is a compendium of evangelical doctrine that leaves me sleepless, it is such an insult to the heavenly Father. My lot is to feel these things; they rub me where I am most sensitive. They would rub another where he is most callous, and he would not be aware of the attrition. And therefore I never speak of them except, as now, to elucidate a principle. Passing, then, from my case to yours, I doubt not that in the very philosophy of things you are perfectly constituted to suffer from what has befallen you, although to another it would be nothing.”

Gray darted upon the parson a glance of astonished warning; but the parson did not see it. He merely made for his cheek a securer prop in his hand, directed his gaze at the heart of the candle-flame, and went on in tones of ethereal serenity:

“It should perhaps be admitted in the beginning that I have not what may appropriately be called a physical apprehension of your difficulty. It is, as it were, wholly extraneous to all my inevitable bodily functions; nor does it disturb either the logical or the moral equilibrium of my faculties. Nevertheless, sympathy is a long tangent, and by means of this I can touch you in the distance. By means of it I can reach to an understanding of the strange fact that you suffer from the consequences of unhappy love. But, my dear friend, if you suffer greatly from such a cause, this can only arise from the fact that you regard love as of essential importance in the life and destiny of man; and it had occurred to me that if your views could be made to abate their

vehemence—if other views, less impetuous and absorbing, could be substituted—your sufferings might be lessened and made even tolerable.

“Woman,” resumed the parson after a pause, and with a smile of deepening pity, “woman was without doubt created by the heavenly Father that man should love her; and, since you have loved one, you are at least entitled to the consolation of having done His holy will. But, on the other hand, it should never be forgotten what countless ages have elapsed since woman was created, and how, in the mean time she has so changed as no longer to represent a perfect expression of the divine handiwork; and that, therefore, there is great reason to believe that God will regard with infinite mercy the case of one of his male creatures who, in this age of the world, should find it impossible to fall in love.

“It is on account of this changed condition of woman that marriage has long been so prevalent a source of unhappiness to the other

sex, instead of every marriage being one of perfect happiness, as was originally intended. For many years, I have studied the subject, being myself a bachelor, and I have collected from all human life its most illustrious examples of misery. It would be wearisome to illustrate, but you recall the case of the Arabian Nights, do you not? Was there ever more overwhelming testimony to the decline and fall of woman? Think of an innocent man's being forced to murder a thousand of them before he could find one! Think of the fair-mindedness with which he one thousand times conducted his examination! Think of one thousand disappointments! There is no evidence that the woman he last chose was any better than her predecessors: it simply showed that he had not the heart to remove any more of them, and that he chose rather to suffer than be cruel. Then, there is the case of Bluebeard—a tale of the highest moral import. Unhappy Bluebeard! brought down by his wrongs to the level of a common executioner! Or take the

case of Henry the Eighth. Look at *his* trials and misfortunes! It is customary to extend sympathy to his wives; but had poor Henry been perfectly happy with the first one, would he ever have risked a second? If *any* man were perfectly happy with his wife, would he ever *murder* her? But, my dear friend, only think how much more fortunate you are than the martyr of the Arabian Nights, or Bluebeard, or Henry the Eighth, in having escaped the possible necessity of doing what they did! It seems to me the whole truth regarding your case is this: you imagine yourself unhappy, because you believe you have lost some greater happiness; on the contrary, you should consider yourself happy in having perhaps escaped the necessity of becoming a homicide."

Had the parson been asleep and dreaming? Had he grown sarcastic? Had he made the solitary effort of his life to be humorous? He had delivered the latter half of his comforting discourse with a cast of visage so inscrutably queer, as to elude all human interpretation,

and yet with a voice so gentle and full of faith that it would have been hard to believe that he was not reading the ninetieth Psalm. Then, having snuffed the candle with a quick audible sigh that it was so nearly burnt out, he glanced at his Flute and leaned back in his chair with the patient but weary manner of one who should say—

“I have done what I can: why does he stay longer? Life is so serious, the books so many, my candle so short!”

But Gray did not go at once. He sat opposite the philosopher, absorbed in pitying contemplation of the infinite loneliness of his life. It struck him that if at that moment the head of the parson had been turned into bronze or marble, it would have passed as the eternal masterpiece of some sculptor who had embodied his conception of how Adam would have looked in middle age, had he never heard of Eve.

For some time he stayed away from the Falconers'. But he went at last one afternoon, and loitered till supper in his old way; and really

the first visit was much less embarrassing than he had expected.

The major came in late from the fields, and, after a vigorous washing of his tanned face and neck and arms in a wooden basin at the spring in the yard, was ready for his coffee and ash-cake. Then, with a brief prelude on crows and squirrels in his corn, he plunged head foremost into Cordelia and Portia and Calphurnia. In his college days the major had written a disquisition on the heroines of Shakespeare. The disquisition had been praised, and he had never got over it.

Amy appeared wholly taken up with her own thoughts, and with the weaving of much cloth against the day of her wedding, now so near at hand. She met him with a swift covert look of resentful inquiry, but, seeing him at ease, became herself entirely natural. Yet so changed. She was more polite, and certainly she created an impression of domestic womanliness that filled him with surprise. But the girlish coquetries were gone absolutely.

They might still exist for Joseph, and he fancied that they did; but for him—no! He had simply ceased to form part of her life. And, as for any self-accusal—as for any affection for him which might have clung to her in their new relationship out of all the associations of the old—there was not a trace. He wanted to think as well of her as he could; and he stayed away from the Falconers' altogether until he should be able to treat her with kindness when they met again. But he had now to discover that his kindness was not needed. For, once during the evening, the major and Mrs. Falconer having been called from the room, he went over and sat down beside her, and began to talk to her; but she drew herself a little away, and merely replied to his questions in a manner that said, "You bore me." So that he walked back to town with a rather bleak sense of being a second time rejected.

Still, he went to the Falconers' regularly after this, sometimes not seeing Amy, and al-

ways received by the others on the new footing without comment. Twice Joseph was there; and at supper he sat alone on his side of the table, and Joseph and Amy sat on the other, facing him. During the meal, she would lean over and add a little butter to Joseph's hot Indian cakes, and pour cream into Joseph's milk, as he had known her of old to do for him. She did it with a shade of ostentation now, but he was not aware of that.

Nothing had ever wounded his pride as did this seeming determination of hers to shut him entirely out of her life; and he had his moments of hot anger that she could thus hold herself victoriously at bay against all his better impulses. One afternoon, as he was passing the garden, he saw her feeding William Penn choice bits of greenery over the garden fence, laying her cheek beside his, and rubbing her nose against his nose. Among his books, he had one in which occurred this sentence: "There liveth on earth a not uncommon but most distasteful species of woman, whose delight it is

to treat ye brute as a human being and ye human being as a brute." He had once drawn his pencil through the sentence; but, by no choice of his own, he thought of it that day.

A little while remained now till he should be going; and, having heard one afternoon that Amy was in town, he went out to talk for the last time with Mrs. Falconer.

She was one of the first of those remarkable gentlewomen who followed their husbands into the wilderness, and there in time laid an impress so strong and fine upon the local civilization that its traditions are lustrous still. To him she had always been a sympathetic companion and the sole sharer of his confidences; but on this subject they had never spoken since the day when he had asked her consent to his suit. More than once, however, he had discovered her eyes resting on him with a look of quiet happiness, as though the affair had turned out in keeping with her wishes.

She was at work in her garden. He had

long ago noticed that he never found her idle or even resting.

"Only see," she said, with brave sprightliness, "how marvellously vegetation grows in this soil! It has been only five or six weeks since you stood by the fence where you are now, and watched me planting seed. Now look at the plants—how green, how thrifty, how enormous!"

"It has been a long time to me," he answered, with rather quiet musing—"long enough for your plants to have died from age. I have lived faster than they have. I feel as though something within me had gone from spring to autumn and dropped its bitter leaves, fruitless."

"They *are* bitter now," she replied in a voice so low that he hardly heard it, "but if you treasure them rightly, in time they will yield you a perfume."

"Do you remember," he went on—for her words made no impression on him—"do you remember what I said to you the last time I

stood here? I boasted that I had yet to meet with my first great defeat in life—had yet to encounter that common myth of inefficient characters, an insurmountable barrier. I boasted that I believed in no such forces in the world that are stronger than our wills, and that the imperfection of our lives resulted from the imperfection of our own planning and doing. I boasted that, if ideals got shattered, men did the shattering themselves. I boasted that I would go on rearing the structure of my life to the last detail, just as I had long conceived it. I have learned better since then.”

They had sat down on a small bench inside the garden fence, and a maple-tree threw its shade over them. She took her knitting out now, and, leaning toward him, measured a few rows of stitches against his wrist. “These are your mittens for next winter,” she said, parenthetically. “When you suffer from cold hands, you’ll have only to think, not of me, but of the major’s sheep, and then you’ll remember that you have the warming-pans with

you." He gave her a look of gratitude and sat silently watching her ever-toiling, hard, beautiful hands.

"Go on," she said, softly, urging him to drain his heart of its bitter dregs.

But he sat awhile, looking absently out across the garden, with his big black hat lying on his knees and his hands clasped loosely around it. She leaned over again, and with a gentle pressure on his hand, measured the widening band of yarn against his wrist.

"I'd like you to understand it all," he then continued, still not looking at her, but with a personal appeal in his tone, as though her action had reminded him of something he was about to forget. "I had not meant to speak of it; but I'd like *you* to realize fully what this means to me. It is a thing that a man finds it hard to talk about, and that one man never discusses with another."

"Tell me everything! Why shouldn't you?"

"We can't speak of *her*!"

"That is understood."

He fell into silence again, but began at last like a man who has a story :

"About four years ago, we began to hear a great deal in Pennsylvania about Kentucky. I doubt whether such accounts were ever given of a new country as reached us from time to time—accounts of its richness, beauty, and vastness. We were told that men and women were wild about it in Virginia, where the people have such a love of land; that many were hurrying to it from distant parts of the United States, and that as soon as families could settle with safety, thousands would move into it as into a garden of Eden.

"I got interested also in stories of the pioneers. The narratives seemed to come from a new cradle, a new infancy, of the human race. The wilderness struggle was primitive; it was primeval. In my Homer I found many of the elements of its hardy simple life. The figures of the chief actors passed before my imagination like the heroes of an epic: it was

ages before the date of gunpowder; they should have been fighting with shield and spear. Larger than the figures of the men often towered the figures of the women; and when I thought of them, my mind was drawn away from Greece to the cradle of their own race, to the Anglo-Saxons—to the Norsemen—to Normandy—to Britain—to the conquest of the New World—to all the wars of this race from first to last for liberty and lands and herds and homes; and always urging on the men, fighting with them, fighting for them, fighting over their dead bodies—the women. In the conquest of Kentucky, I felt that I saw the old drama of the race acted over, with the old fierce, lovable virtues. I saw a fresh, vigorous starting-point for the inexhaustible stock.

“I was alone in life, and I said to myself, I will go to Kentucky; it is a land I should like to live in and a people I should like to live among; and I will cast my lot and my destiny in with theirs. Perhaps in time I shall find

there the woman I ought to marry. She will be one of the first generation of this new people—strengthened by difficulty, softened by hardship, simple and pure from close contact with nature, serious from having been poor, gentle from the sight of suffering. I imagined that she and I ought to do well and live happily together, life having been hard to us both and brought much kinship of experience. I meant to try to be worthy of such a woman.”

He spoke the last words apologetically and broke off abruptly. But she waited for him to go on.

“The next year I made my way to Kentucky; and the next year *you* came, and we were soon friends, and I was soon at home with all of you; then I fell in love with Amy—and—that is all! The whole plan of my life has gone to pieces. That is all!”

She knew it was not all, and she merely counted her stitches under her breath.

When he spoke again, it was with a certain

harshness, as though he felt contempt for what he was saying:

“It has always been an ideal of mine that the first woman I loved should be the one I ought to marry. I have always felt that if I did not, I should step down to a lower plane and become—I don’t know what. We are not to speak of her; but you know that I have loved Amy, have thought she loved me, have asked her to be my wife, and have found her pledged to marry my friend. No one will ever understand how really married to her I already was—how my thoughts had run into the future, always planning for us both, always binding us more closely by coming ties, always seeing my life take its meaning, its fulness, its completion, in her. And now, this ideal, too, has been trampled on.”

The sun was getting low, and the shadow of the maple lengthened rapidly across the garden. She began to think that the major would soon be coming in from the fields, and that evening duties called her.

She put her knitting into her pocket, and, leaning over, picked up his hat which had fallen off his knees.

"Are you sure," she said, speaking slowly and caressingly, like a nurse to a wounded man—"are you sure you may not still marry the first woman you love? You have never loved Amy."

He turned upon her a look of pained astonishment, as though a new wound had been dealt him by a trusted hand.

"And you think," he replied, with keen suffering, putting on his hat as though it were best to go—"you think *I* will ever believe I did not love her?"

"Knowing her as you know her now, would you marry her?"

"Don't ask me that!" he cried, sternly. "I have no right to answer such a question. It would not be kind."

"You *have* answered it," she said. "You have answered it just as you would have answered it to your own heart had you married

her. If a trivial accident had not kept you from speaking before Joseph spoke—for we both know what would have happened in that case—you would have soon found out that it was not Amy you loved, but your own ideal of her; and anything like your ideal of her she will never, never be in this world.”

He did not answer, but kept his face turned away.

“I would have undeceived you long ago,” she went on, hurriedly, “but you would not have listened. You would have thought that I was doing wrong and that you were doing wrong to discuss her faults and shortcomings. It was necessary that she herself should undeceive you, just as she has. But only think, if you had been undeceived too late! Ah, John! to be disappointed as you have been—what is that to being disappointed in marriage?”

An intensity of sad passion all at once trembled in her voice, and he kept his face turned away, knowing that there were tears in

her eyes. Once before he had heard that same tone, but colored with proud scorn, when she had said, "The major has an idea that he should have married intellect." He had always suspected some carefully hidden tragedy in her life: the revelation of it which had escaped her in that sentence appalled him now. He kept his face turned away, with his breath drawn in and his jaws set hard together; and then he felt her hand laid lightly on both of his, which were crossed on his knees; and when she spoke again, her voice was never more sweet and calm, though sadder, as if with penitence for her own confession:

"It is not what has happened to you thus once that I am thinking. That is nothing. It will pass, and in the end can only help you. But what I regret is the power that life will have to hurt you again and again on account of the ideals of yours that you have built up in secret. The mistake you have made is not in cherishing the ideals; it is in regarding them as the measure of absolute truth, and in regarding

yourself as a success or a failure according to the measure of their realization.

"So that I am glad, for your own sake, that you are going. You do not need Kentucky; you need civilization. It will perhaps be years before you return; and before you do return, I may be——! You know that in all our talks I have my last word; and will you take my last word with you this time? I will walk across the garden with you."

As they walked slowly side by side, she said, with a smile and a certain air of chiding, looking up to him as he towered above her—

"For the best of us, ideals are of two kinds. There are first the ideals that correspond to our highest sense of perfection and express what we might be were life, the world, ourselves, all different and better. Let these be high as they may! They are not useless because unattainable. Life is not a failure because they are never attained. God Himself requires of us the unattainable: He says to us, Be ye perfect, even as I am perfect! He could

not do less. He commands perfection, and then —forgives us that we are not perfect! But He does not count us failures because we have to be forgiven. Our ideals also demand of us the impossible in life; but because we come far short of them we have no right to suffer or to despair and count ourselves as failures. Ideals such as these—what are they like? They are like light-houses. But light-houses are not made to live in; neither can we live in our ideals. I suppose they are meant to shine on us from afar, when the night of our life is dark and stormy, and perhaps to remind us of a haven of hope, as we drift or sink in shipwreck.

“But there are ideals of another sort; and it is these that you lack. As we advance further into life, out of larger experience of the world and knowledge of ourselves, there are unfolded the ideals of what will be possible to us if we make the best use of the world and of ourselves, taken as we are. But, let these be as high as they may, they will always be lower

than those others that are perhaps the veiled intimations of heaven and our immortality. They will always be imperfect; but life is not a failure because they are so. It is these that are to burn for us, not like light-houses in the distance, but like candles in our hands. Alas that for so many of us they are too much like candles!—the longer they burn, the lower they burn, until even before death they go out altogether! But I know that it will not be thus with you. At first you will have disappointments and sufferings—the world on one side, unattainable ideals of perfection on the other. But at last the comforting light of what you may actually do and be in an imperfect world will shine out more and more; and it is this that will kindly lead you—never to perfection, but always nearer toward it.”

There were many leave-takings, for, as school-master, he was a central personage in the town; and it seemed to him that his heart-strings were tugged at until they grew sore to

the least strain. All partings trouble us; each may be the last; each touches that deep root of pain, which the last one always tears out of the soul as a storm tears up a tree.

For all his wishing that the school-days would end, when the final morning did come, it was with a lump in his throat that he looked out upon his children and tried to speak to them.

"You know that this is the last day of school," he said. "To-morrow I am going away—far away—and may never come back. And, whether I come or not, I will never teach again; so that I am now saying good-bye to you as my school-children.

"There is one thing I want you to remember; and so I shall tell you once more: a man need not be rude in order to be brave, nor a woman untrue in order to be lovely.

"But what I now wish most to say to you is this: that I have never been able to forget who you are, never to forget the kind of men and women your fathers and mothers were,

and that you, their children, should grow up to be. I am not speaking so much to those whose parents have not been long in Kentucky as to those whose parents were the first to fight for the land until it was safe for others to follow and share it. Let me tell you that nothing just like that was ever or anywhere done before in all this world. And if, as I sit here and look down on you, I can't help seeing that, although you are so young, and your parents should be so young, this one of you has no father, and this one no mother, and this one neither father nor mother, and that almost none of you have both, still I cannot help saying, Happy, happy children! not that you have lost them, but that they were such to lose!

“All of you are still too young to know what they have done, or how the whole world will some day speak of them. Still, you can understand some things. For nowadays, when you go to your homes at night, you can lie down and sleep without fear; and the oldest

among you can well remember the time when no one could do that. Or, in the morning when you watch your fathers go off to their work, and your mothers about theirs, and you go about yours, you can feel sure that you will all be together again at nightfall—not one missing.

“And then only think, that by the time you are men and women, Kentucky will no longer be the great wilderness you now live in. There will be thousands and thousands of people scattered over it; and the forest will be cut down—can you ever believe that?—cut through and through, leaving some trees here and some trees there. And all the cane will be cut down: can you believe that? And the buffalo will be gone, and wild-cats, and bear, and wolves, and instead of these there will be flocks of the whitest sheep, with little lamb frisking about on the green spring meadows; and under the big shady trees in the pastures there will be herds of red cattle, so gentle, and with backs so soft and broad that you could

almost stretch yourself out and go to sleep on them, and their mouths would never stop chewing the cuds. Only think of it! Only think of it! Only think of the hundreds of orchards with their apple-blossoms, and of the big, ripe, golden apples on the trees in the fall! It will be one of the quietest, sweetest, loveliest, gentlest lands that a people ever owned; and this is the gift to you of your fathers who fought for it and of your mothers who fought for it also. And you must never forget that you would never have had such fathers, had you not had such mothers to stand by them and to die with them.

“This is what I have wished to teach you more than anything in your books—that you may become men and women worthy of them and of what they have left you. I am not a Kentuckian myself; but it was what I heard of them that drew me away out here; and I have wished that while I lived in their country and taught their children I might not do them any wrong.

“But I have talked to you a long time; and now good-by! My children, my friends, my brave little men and women of Kentucky, good-by, and may God bless you! I wish you long and happy lives, and I hope we may all meet again.”

They started forward and swarmed toward him; only, as the foremost rose, little Jennie, with one last mighty action of defiant joy, hurled her arithmetic out of the window; and a chubby-cheeked veteran on the end of the bench produced a big red apple from between his legs and went into it with a smack of gastric rapture that made his toes curl and sent his swift glance to the rafters. They swarmed on him, and he folded his arms around the little ones and kissed them; the older boys, brown and barefoot, stepping sturdily forward one by one, and holding out a strong hand that closed on his and held it, their eyes answering his sometimes with clear calm trust and fondness, sometimes lowered and full of tears; other little hands resting on each of his

shoulders, waiting for their turns. Then there were little echoes in his ears—sweet gay voices out in the open air dying away in one direction and another—and then—silence—himself alone—school-master no longer.

IX.

THE POETRY OF EARTH.

THE end of June at last, and the day of the wedding.

According to the usage of the time, the ceremony had taken place early in the forenoon, in order that the guests, gathered in from distant settlements of the wilderness, might have the day for festivity and yet reach home before the perils of the night. Late in the afternoon the bridal couple, escorted by many friends, were to ride into town to Joseph's house, and in the evening there was to be a house-warming.

Gray had not gone to the wedding. He had his excuses and his reasons. It was the day of his leaving for Philadelphia and Mount Vernon, and he spent the forenoon busily

enough in settling his affairs. There was a pack to be got ready for the saddle of his horse, his books were to be judiciously divided—part going to the nucleus of the Transylvania Library, a few volumes left to the Reverend James Moore with his compliments, and the copy of “Romeo and Juliet” to the young lady who loved Mercutio.

At intervals in his preparations there reached him from the street the gay voices of those on horseback or in gigs going out to the wedding. Once the noisiest of all groups came along; and, looking out, he saw Joseph go by with a company of young friends, dressed in his wedding-suit, and looking never so happy, proud, and handsome.

Joseph’s house had been finished for the simple scant needs of pioneer life. But scarcely was the bridegroom out of earshot, before many who had variously excused themselves from the wedding began to issue from their homes and move toward it; women, young and old, carrying rolls of linen and loaves of

bread; and boys with huge joints of jerked meat and dried tongues of the buffalo, bear, and deer; there was a noggin, a piggin, a churn, and a home-made chair; there was a quilt from a grandmother, and a pioneer cradle—a mere trough scooped out of a walnut log; an old pioneer sent the antlers of a stag for a hat-rack, and a mighty buffalo rug for the young pair to lie warm under of bitter, winter nights; there came a spinning-wheel, and a bundle of shingles for johnny-cakes; some of the merchants sent packages of Philadelphia groceries; and some of the aristocratic families parted with priceless heirlooms that had been laboriously brought over the Alleghanies—a cup and saucer of Sèvres, a pair of tall brass candlesticks, and a Venus-mirror framed in ebony.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when John Gray, having jumped on the back of a strong trusty horse at the stable of the Indian Queen, and leaned over to shake again the hands of the friends who had met there to

see him off, turned his horse's head in the direction of the path that led to the Wilderness road, and was soon out of sight of the town.

But when he had gone about a mile, he struck into the forest at right angles, and rode across the country until he reached that green woodland pathway which led from the home of the Falconers to the public road between Lexington and Frankfort. About fifty yards from this he tied his horse, and, walking forward, he sat down on the roots of a red oak, and waited for the bridal procession to pass. He had said to himself that he would like to see her—see them all—for the last time, remaining himself unseen.

It was a day when the poetry of earth makes itself felt on the sensitive soul like ravishing music that has no sound. The air, warm and full of dying and of new-born fragrance, was of that ethereal untinged clearness which spread over all things the softness of velvet; the far-vaulted heavens, so bountiful of light, were an illimitable weightless curtain of pale-

blue velvet; the rolling clouds were of white velvet; near at hand the grass, the stems of bending wild flowers, the low-drooping sprays of foliage, were so many forms of purest emerald-colored velvet; the gnarled, rough trunks of the trees were of gray and brown velvet; the wings and breasts of the birds, flitting hither and thither high above, were of gold and scarlet velvet; the butterflies were stemless, floating velvet blossoms.

As he waited, living in all beautiful things, drawing life from all beautiful things, his enjoyment was the more vivid for the sharpness of the pain he felt in the separation. "Farewell, Kentucky! farewell!" he said in his heart. "If I never see you again, on my part there is nothing but peace and love between us."

Two hours passed. The cool shadows were swinging round and lengthening eastward. Over the vast billowy expanse of forest, like the sigh of a passing spirit, there swept from out the west the first faint intimation of waning light and the fond mysteries of coming

darkness. Soon afterward, there reached his impatient ear from far down the woodland path the sounds of voices and laughter—again and again—gradually louder and louder—and then through the low dense boughs he caught glimpses of them coming, now beneath the darker arches of the ancient trees, now across pale-green spaces shot by slanting sunbeams. Suddenly there was a halt and a great merry outcry. Long wild grape-vines from opposite sides of the road had been festooned across it, and this barrier of rustic pleasantries had to be cut through. Then on they came again.

At the head of the procession, William Penn in the glory of a new bridle and saddle, with a blanket of crimson cloth; his coat smooth as satin, his mane a tumbling cataract of white silk; bunches of wild roses at his ears; his blue-black eyes never so soft, and seeming for once in his life to lift his feet cautiously, like an elephant bearing an Indian princess.

They were riding side by side and close together, the young pair, now husband and wife,

Joseph keeping one hand on the pommel of her saddle, and using his hat as a fan with the other, while he kept his laughing face turned toward her; she, radiant with the sense of her loveliness and the security of her happiness, and radiant also, perhaps, from some feeble intuition that with such an event the poetry of earth sounds its highest, briefest strain—the joy that begins to die ere it lives, but, being dead, lives changeless in the unforgetful heart—the joy of love that is doomed to perish in the bliss of its own realization.

Next rode the major and Mrs. Falconer, he thinking of Rosalind and regretting that Shakespeare had not seen this wood before he described the forest of Arden, she thinking of John Gray. Then the Reverend James Moore and the widow Spurlock, she privately noticing how shapely the parson looked on horseback, he with his cool face turned toward the tree-tops, but with his dreamy eyes fixed inward on the depths of his logical soul. Then Mr. Horatio Turpin and Miss Kitty Poythresss, he

telling Kitty that at the next purse race he was going to run his s. f. Amethyst, by Emerald, dam Mother of Pearl, she musing how on her wedding-day she would never look so lovely as Amy. And then came others, until at the very end of the procession side by side, rode Peter and the young widow Babcock, he openly a flame and solicitous, she coy and—well advised. For a good many years had yet to pass before the widow became Mrs. Springle. This did not happen, indeed, until several months after she had in spiritual gratitude kissed the Reverend James Moore, and had later listened to his heart-searching sermon on the Kiss that Betrayeth; and by that time, Peter, despite all the illustrious New Jersey traditions, was a blacksmith no longer, but a prosperous Lexington hardware merchant.

It was one of the jests of life that the man whose jest had helped to bring all this about should not have been there to laugh, but lay far away in a mound under a low green elm, unremembered.

They passed, and the sounds of their laughter died away through the forest—passed on to the town awaiting them, to the house-warming, and, please God, to long life and real affection and happiness.

Once *he* had expected to ride beside her at the head of this procession, and there had now gone by him the vision of his own life, as it was to have been.

Long after the last sound had died away in the distance he was still sitting at the root of the red oak. A loud, impatient neigh from his horse aroused him. He sprang lightly up, meaning to ride all night and not to draw rein until he had crossed the Kentucky River and reached Traveller's Rest, the home of Governor Shelby.

X.

THE END WILL COME.

It was early in the autumn when the first news came back to Lexington from John Gray, and this had relation to his business at Mount Vernon. To the Transylvania Library Committee he wrote that the President had made a liberal subscription for the buying of books; and he added some notes of a conversation with him concerning Kentucky politics.

“When I made known to the President who I was, and where I came from,” he wrote in his letter, “he regarded me with a look at once so searching and benign, and his countenance was so tinged with gravity amounting to sadness, that I felt like one of my own school-boys overtaken in some small rascality, and was almost of a mind to march straight to a corner of

the room, and stand with my face to the wall. From the conversation that followed, I am led truly to believe that he knew the name of every member of the Democratic Society of Lexington, my own included, and that he understood Kentucky affairs with regard to national and international complications as no other living man. While questioning me on the subject he had the manner of one who, for the sake of pure conscientiousness, would verify facts which he had already ascertained to be correct. But what impressed me even more than his knowledge was his justice; in illustration of which I shall never forget his saying, with a manner of profound regret, but of the deepest respect, that the part which Kentucky had taken, or had wished to take, in the Spanish and the French conspiracy had caused him greater solicitude than any other single event since the foundation of the national government; but that nowhere else in America or perhaps in the world had the struggle for immediate self-government been at once so nec-

essary and so difficult, and that nowhere else were the mistakes of patriotic and able men more natural or more to be judged with mildness. There could be no question in any fair mind that the President means kindly and wisely toward all of you over there beyond the mountains; and, in fact, he said that his interest in Kentucky dated from the time when as a young man he surveyed land along its eastern border for Lord Fairfax at a doubloon a day.

“I am frank to declare that, having enjoyed the privilege of a long conversation with the President, and been brought to judge rightly, what through ignorance I had judged amiss, I feel myself in honor bound to renounce my past political convictions and to resign the secretaryship of the Lexington Democratic Society. Nor shall I join the Democratic Society of Philadelphia, as had been my ardent wish.”

To Mrs. Falconer he wrote:

“I have crossed the Kentucky Alps and seen the American Cæsar and carried away some

of his gold. I came, I saw, I begged. How do you think I met the President? Wearing a red, white, and blue toga of the thirteen States, and sitting on an ivory throne under the screaming eagle? The truth is, as I was riding toward Mount Vernon one quiet sunny afternoon, I unexpectedly came upon an old gentleman who was putting up some bars that opened into a wheat-field by the roadside. He wore plain drab clothes, a broad-brimmed white hat, and had a hickory switch in his hand, with an umbrella and a long staff attached to his saddle-bow, but with limbs so long, large, and sinewy, a countenance so lofty, masculine, and contemplative, and altogether with a statue-like air, so instantly creating veneration akin to awe, that my heart with a great throb, cried out, It is Washington! I have eaten corn-cakes and milk with him since, and I wish that food could do for me what it does for him. . . . I must not fail to narrate a singular and memorable occurrence of my visit. I had got myself up extra early the next

morning—a feat not hard to do, since for that one night I had chosen not to waste any time in sleep, but to lie awake and think of nothing but the President. Having put on my clothes and descended to the front hall—the doors being already open to let in the fresh air—I passed out, wishing to see the grounds and the garden. Several turns I had taken along the walks of the latter, when from behind some bushes a few yards in front of me there issued tottering along a rather aged lady, who held in her yellow hand some withered leaves and a red rose, from which nearly all the petals had fallen. She must have been near-sighted, for she came tottering toward me with a rather giddy smile of deep self-absorption; but a few feet off she pulled herself up with a start and craned her neck forward at me as if peering into the darkness. Then, seeming satisfied with her examination, she said good-morning, and asked whether I liked to see the sun rise. Being answered that I did, she next inquired whether I thought that God was good. Being assured

that this was my faith, and humble hope, she asked whether I did not think that vice was wicked and virtue preferable. Being given to understand that I had ever courageously entertained these views, she appeared highly pleased with the docility of my morals, and said that, this being the case, she would tell me a beautiful story of the President: how once, when he was about six years old, his father had made him the wealthy owner of a little hatchet. But, on reflection, I will write this story out for you on separate paper, so that you may possess it to preserve after you have destroyed my worthless letter.

“My dear friend,” he wrote at the close, “it is of no little worth to me that I should have come to Mount Vernon at this turning-point of my life. Touching the low state of mind in which I left Lexington on account of what had happened not long before, you laid me under the pledge of as frank speech as my heart should need; and there is good need, I tell you, that, having upon invitation prolonged

my visit here by three full days, I find myself uplifted to a plane of thought and feeling higher than has ever been trod by me. When I began to draw near this place, I seemed to be mounting higher and higher, like a man ascending a mountain; and ever since my arrival there has been this same sense of ascending into a still loftier atmosphere, of surveying a vaster horizon, of beholding the juster relations of surrounding objects.

“All this feeling has its origin in my contemplation of the character of the President. You know that when a heavy sleet falls upon the Kentucky forest, the great trees crack and split, or groan and stagger, with branches snapped off or broken and trailing. But he is to me a vast mountain-peak, always calm, always lofty, always resting upon a base that nothing can shake; never higher, never lower, never changing; from every quarter of the earth storms rush in and beat upon him, but when they have passed, there he is just as he was; the heavens empty their sleets and snows

on his head, but these make him look only the purer, only the more sublime.

“From the spectacle of this great man thus bearing the great burdens of his great life, I have grown ashamed of how poorly I have borne the burdens of mine. A new standard of what is possible to human nature has been raised within my spirit; for I have seen with my own eyes a man whom the adverse forces of the world have not been able to wreck—a lover of perfection, who has so wrought it out in his character that to know him is to be awed into reverence of his virtues. I came to him in the lowest state of discouragement; but I shall go away from him with nobler hopes of what I may do and be in this life than I have ever had before.”

When the next news was received from Gray, he was in Philadelphia, giving his attention to the choosing and shipment of the books for the library; and after the lapse of the several months required for their bringing on, they were put down in Lexington (nor

have many volumes been added during the hundred years since they arrived). About this time he wrote to Mrs. Falconer that his expectation of coming into possession of several thousand dollars by bequest had been unwarranted, for the case had been appealed; and some months later he wrote that it had finally been lost.

During that winter he must have been miserably poor; for toward spring, he begged her pardon for having had to let a pair of mittens, lined with lamb's wool, go for a night's lodging and breakfast. "I tell you this," he said, "because I promised to let you know the whole truth as to how I was faring. My dear friend, I should not have parted with your gift, only the night air was piercing, a cold had reached my lungs, and I knew the most precious use of the mittens—which I had always prized too much even to wear—would be to buy me a warm bed and some food."

Months afterward came the news that he was in the office of a law firm. Then for a

long time no tidings. Then several letters in quick succession—short letters with a different ring in them, the undertone of melancholy now dying out, and in its place a certain developing note of happiness. At long intervals during the two years following, more hurried messages, with promises to write at length, which were never fulfilled except by other promises just as brief. But she understood: they were all she wanted. She knew that he was fighting the battle of his life now—fighting it with all his might and fighting it victoriously. Another year and there came the card of a new firm—"Brown and Gray,"—and the following autumn a long letter from him, and an invitation to his wedding.

She shed tears over the invitation. For days they were in her eyes, whenever she took it up and saw the names together—John Gray and Eleanor Warner. It had always been a conviction of hers that if he married the wrong kind of woman he would be ruined; and she felt tempted to undertake the journey to Phil-

adelphia, to see whether he were now making a second mistake.

For the first time in her life she felt hurt and angry with him; for, although his letter was full of the old affection, he wrote not one word of the woman he was to marry. She walked the room with his letter in one hand and the invitation in the other.

"He is like every other man," she complained to herself aloud, "to go off and forget that I wanted to know all about it and about *her*, where he met her, and how he asked her, and who she is, and how he felt about it *this* time!"

During the next few years she heard almost nothing; and her sole means of discovering the truth about him were those rare, hasty notes which seemed to result from a mere habit of faithfully setting up a mile-stone for her to mark how he got along on the highway of life. At times it appeared to her that the mile-posts were getting closer together now, and the Philadelphia papers had a way of referring to

him as "Judge Gray," as though everybody knew who Judge Gray was; and by and by came other papers—yes, other papers—announcing the birth of children. God knows she had a hard cry over the first of these!

Then Major Falconer died, and that brought the longest letter she had ever had from John. It was like putting a staff into her hand; after she had read it, she was never able to feel otherwise than that he had come into her lonely house to live with her and was always there—though elsewhere. With his was a letter from Eleanor Gray also; and when she had read that, she folded it to her heart amid burning tears.

Both pressed her to come and be at home with them henceforth for good—not to come as though torn up with the idea of being replanted, but as though lifted noiselessly up in her own rocking-chair and set down softly in another place. She should have her room, her furniture, her servant, her books, her ways and wishes, everything as nearly as possible; they

would come out for her and relieve her of all care in moving.

"I should like to be with you," she wrote in reply; "but already I have lived two lives, and it is now too late to begin a third. It would be like putting very new wine into very old bottles: indeed, it would be like trying to make the fleece grow back again on the back of a shorn sheep."

After this the years went fast. Faster still came the changes in Kentucky. The prophecy which John Gray had made in the farewell to his children passed to its realization, and reality followed far beyond it. From over the green summits of the Alleghanies on the west, down the green shores of the Ohio on the east, settlers of the Anglo-Saxon blood hurried into the great tranquil land, and there jostled and shouldered one another in the fierce old race-spirit and selfish passion of soil-winning and home-building, until a stout foot had been planted on every slope and a warning hand laid on every tree. Lexington, the pioneer outpost,

consisting of a wooden castle and a few log huts outside its walls, became the manufacturing town of the Western civilization, with streets thronged by rich merchants and furl-clad traders; gathered into it were men and women making a society so notable that it began to call itself by a name that is now used only as a pointed jest; at its bar were heard illustrious voices, the echoes of which are not yet dead, are past all dying; the genius of Jouett found for itself the secret of painting canvases so lustrous, fine, and true, that never since then in the history of the State have they been equalled; the Transylvania University arose with lecturers great enough to be known throughout America and Europe; and the students of law and medicine hurried to it from all parts of the land.

It was of changes such as these that Mrs. Falconer was thinking, as one cool afternoon in early autumn she was walking slowly around her garden—slowly, because she was an old

woman now, and because the work of her life was done and there was no longer need to hurry. She had just come from town, where she had been to the studio of Jouett, to give him a last sitting for her portrait, and she was dressed in that rich lace cap and satin gown in which he painted her, as those who see the portrait nowadays well know.

She was thinking of these changes: of the dark dreadful year in which she had come with the major into the Kentucky wilderness; of the years of terror, loneliness, and hardship that had followed; and of how pleasant life was really getting to be, now that for her it would soon be over. She had grown rich by the product of her looms and by the sale of part of her lands; she had her Africans to work for her; she gave her dinners now and then; indeed, her dinner to Aaron Burr some years before had reminded even her of the elegance of civilization. Yes! as happens to so many of us, just when the terrible battle of life had been really won, the

time had about come for the soldier to fall asleep.

But perhaps it was the finishing of the portrait that had peculiarly saddened her to-day. When Jouett had gently said, "And now, madam, I do not need you longer, because I have you already," it had seemed to her as though she had been dismissed as useless, and that the portrait was all that remained of her in life, as in time it would be.

She meant to leave this portrait to John Gray; and it was on him also that her thoughts and memories rested.

But in all these years had she ever walked in her garden without remembering him? Although it was wholly changed, did she not know that she was now looking toward the very spot where one sweet afternoon in May, long, long ago, he had leaned over the picket fence—his big black hat, decorated with a Jacobin cockade, swinging in his hand—and had asked her consent to marry Amy? Was not yonder the maple, on a little bench under

the shade of which he and she sat some weeks later, and while she had watched over her left shoulder to see whether the Indians were creeping up on them, she had talked with him about the ideals of life? She laughed softly to herself at recalling that scene, but she touched her handkerchief to her eyes also, as she turned to pass on. Then she stopped abruptly.

Coming straight down the garden-walk toward her with a light rapid step, his head in the air, a frank smile on his fresh face, an eager earnest look in his gray eyes, was a young fellow of some eighteen years. A few feet off he lifted his hat with a free, gallant air, uncovering a head of dark-red hair, closely curling.

"I beg your pardon, madam," he said, in a voice that fell on her ear like a strain of music new, yet seeming long remembered. "Is this Mrs. Falconer?"

"Yes," she replied beginning to tremble, "I am Mrs. Falconer."

"Then I should like to introduce myself to

you, dear madam. I am John Gray, the son of your old friend, and my father sends me to you with his faithful love, and desires me to deliver to you this letter."

"John Gray!" she cried, running up close to him and searching his face. "*You* John Gray! *You!*" And she threw her arms around his neck and covered his face with kisses.

"Madam," said the impudent young fellow, stooping to pick up his hat, and laughing outright at his own blushes and confusion, "I don't wonder that my father loved you."

"I never kissed your father in my life!" she retorted, "though I may have wished to!" And beneath the wrinkled ivory of her skin, a tinge of faintest pink rose and disappeared.

Half an hour later she was sitting at a western window of her room. Young John Gray had insisted with a decisive air of business that he must himself go back to town to see to his trunk and to post an immediate letter to his father and mother, announcing his safe arrival; and in her lap lay his father's letter to

her, which with tremulous fingers she was now wiping her spectacles to read. In all this lapse of years she had never allowed herself to think of *her* John Gray as having grown older: she saw him still young, as when he used to lean over the garden fence. But now the presence of this son had the effect of suddenly pushing the father away on into life; and her tears flowed silently with the first realization that he, too, must have passed the climbing-point and have set his feet on that shaded downward slope that leads to the quiet valley.

"My dear friend," for thus the letter ran in part, "I send John to you with the wish that you will be to the son the same inspiring soul you once were to the father. You will find him a little headstrong, and with great notions of what he is to be in the world. But he is warm-hearted and clean-hearted. Let him do for you the things I used to do; let him hold the yarn on his arms for you to wind off, and read to you your favorite novels; he is a good reader for a young fellow. And will you get

out your spinning-wheel some night when the logs are roaring in the fireplace and let him hear its music? Will you some time with your own hands make him a johnny-cake on a new pine shingle? I want him to know a woman who can do all these things and still be a great lady. And lay upon him all the burdens that in any way you can, so that he shall not think too much of what he may some day do in life, but of what he is actually doing.

“From John you will learn what you may wish to know regarding his mother. Many a time within these years I myself have sat down to write to you of Eleanor, but I could never do so; time and time before we were married, I endeavored to give you my confidence, but the letters would never quite justify themselves. In all your own letters you have never once mentioned the subject, since I have not; and your very silence has let me know how you reproached me for mine. But after what had happened between us I could never feel otherwise than that what I should say to you of Elea-

nor would be like a report, forwarded for your inspection; and I could not bear the thought of subjecting her to that. I doubt whether we ever subject any one we love to the critical examination of another. Not that I should have feared your censure, but that I should have resented your approval. Yes: that is the truth; under the circumstances I should have resented your praise of Eleanor. Therefore, I have always faithfully let you know that I have been happy, and have left you silently to infer from my happiness the virtues of her character. But I know that you will never question John about his mother unless I ask you to do so; and I now beg that you will do this. For reasons which you understand, the portrait of her painted by the hand of a son will be more significant than one from the hand of her husband.

“While I say that I am happy, still it is true that I have within me the old sense of a *ruin*—a feeling that something went wrong when that whole episode happened to me in Ken-

tucky, for which nothing has ever atoned. So that you see I am but little changed. And as for the imperfection of life itself, while I have always grown happier in what it can bestow, in secret I have become the more unhappy for what it takes away. And surely from all of us it does take away more or less of what was best in us at the outset. I could never be happy in a world in which I was imperfect myself and in which any single creature was suffering. Long ago there came to me, as you foretold, the ideals of actual duty that I should carry about as candles in my hand; but I have never lost sight of those other ideals which shine like light-houses in the distance. I have this feeling—that I shall need my light-houses when I no longer need my candles. For experience admonishes me that I am now perhaps at the highest point of what men call worldly prosperity. I have succeeded. I have wrought out the plan of my life. All that Macbeth had not, I have—wife, children, home, friends, duties, honors,

ease; all are mine. There have been times, when with natural misgiving, lest I had ventured too far these many summers in a sea of glory, I have prepared for myself the lament of Wolsey on his fall; yet ill-fortune has not overthrown me or mine.

“But what of that? Not far ahead now must lie the great mortal changes, coming always nearer, always faster. And with the cessation of every earthly tie, the flame of duty connected with it is extinguished. One by one the duties end; one by one the lights go out. So that, if I should live to be a very old man, I shall find myself with no duties, no candles. And then, O my friend, what should shine in upon me in my vacant darkness but those distant unchanging beacons, which seem to throw their rays across the stormy sea of this life from the calm ocean of the infinite? This is my faith; for truly I do not know whence came to me the ideals of my earliest manhood, if not from a source beyond all humanity.

“It has always been a regret that you could

not come to us. When I left Kentucky, it was with the thought of sooner or later returning; but for the first few years return was impossible; then I married; and Eleanor has always had duties here. But we get great reports of the Transylvania University, of the bar of Lexington, of the civilization that I fore-saw would spring up in Kentucky; and I send John to you with the wish that he hear lectures and afterward go into the office of some one whom I shall name, and finally marry and settle there for life. You recall this as the wish of my own; through John, then, I shall accomplish it—through John shall be done what I could not do. You see how I cling to my early fancies! I have given him the names of my school-children. He is to find out those of them who still live there, and to tell me of those who have passed away or have been scattered.

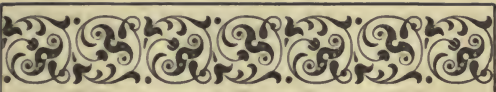
“I do not know; but if at the end of life I should be left alone here, perhaps I shall make my way back to Kentucky and die at John’s

feet, as the old tree falls beside the young one."

She had strained the letter to her dim eyes in the last glimmer of twilight. The room was already dark, except near the rude little four-paned window. There was the dull red glow of a single half-burnt log on the hearth, and a cricket stirred and began its song—that song for ears that have lost their summer. From out a corner came a feeble ticking of the great clock.

She let the letter drop softly to her lap, and folding her delicate withered hands on the window-sill, rested her forehead on them in prayer.

THE END.



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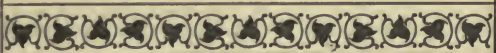
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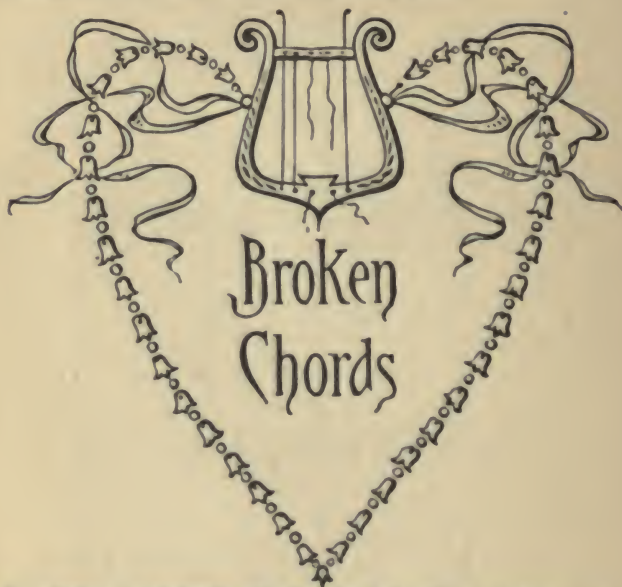
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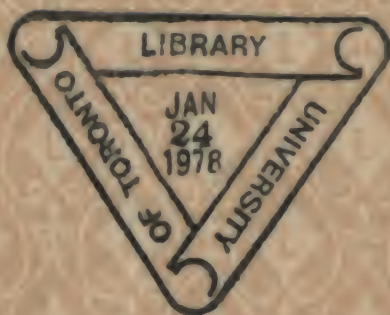
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